DECEMBER 2021

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MONDAY
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GENEVE
28
SWISS MADE

TUDOR

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EMPORIO ARMANI

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DECEMBER 2021

LOLLY ADEFOPE

on the vulnerability of comedy and her hopes for 2022 on page 54. MY FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TRADITION IS… drinking Baileys whenever I can. THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT I'VE RECEIVED IS… a Pikachu onesie when onesies were fashionable.

REBECCA DENNIS

shares some of her best breathwork techniques on page 186. MY FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TRADITION IS… singing around the fire. THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT I'VE RECEIVED IS… a cashmere poncho made by my friend.

JANINE DI GIOVANNI

shares what Christmas means to her on page 47. MY FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TRADITION IS… listening to Christmas carols on the radio as soon as I wake up. THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT I'VE RECEIVED IS… my son, Luca.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RANNJAN & JOAWN

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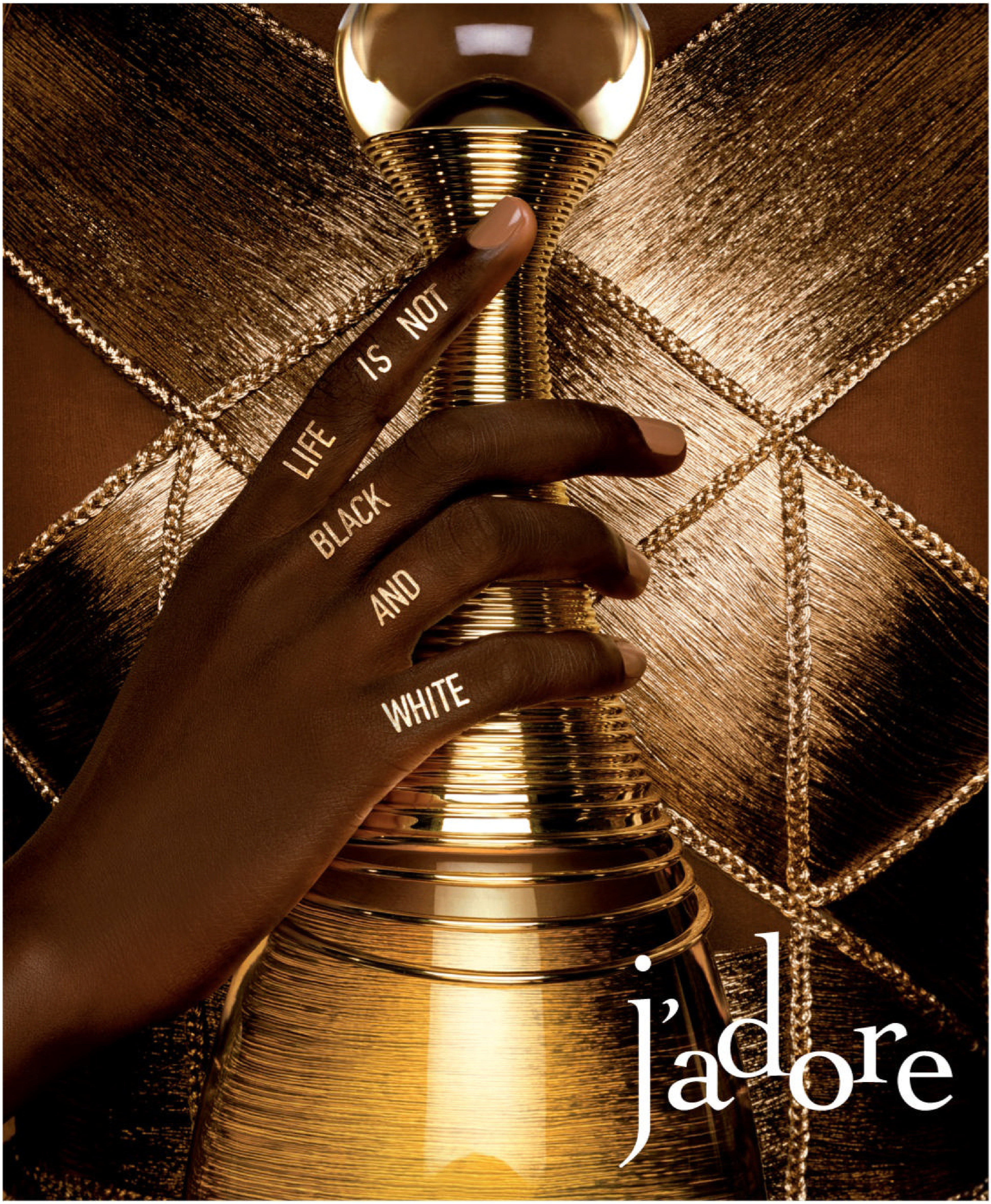


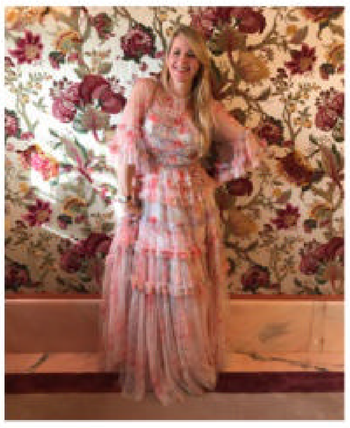
LIFE IS NOT
BLACK
AND
WHITE
j'adore

LIFE IS GOLD

DIOR

FROM LEFT Perfect party dresses (page 92); reinvent your giftwrap (page 156); create a rustic celebration (page 122)

Glad tidings



The planning and preparation for the December issue starts many months before the festive season begins, and normally I'm slightly niggled by the influx of 'Christmas in July' press releases, but this year, I relished every one.

I'm surely not alone in feeling even more excited for this Yuletide after the last one was so suddenly whipped away. And while I'm still approaching it with the hopeful trepidation that we've all assumed these days, I also just want it to feel really special – making up for lost time perhaps.

As always, we've filled *Red* with as much inspiration and magic as we could muster. There's a bounty of party outfits in our style section and even more fabulousness in *The Night Before Christmas*, on page 92. We're also going all-out with statement make-up in our beauty story on page 106 (my own eyelids will be awash with glittery metallics).

When it comes to entertaining, we're proposing abundance and ease in equal measure. So that's a crowd-pleasing Christmas feast with an Italian twist from chef Giovanna Ryan on page 130, a delicious vegan roast courtesy of the McCartney family on page 164, and Edd Kimber's sweet traybakes on page 150 – large enough to feed a crowd, but also the perfect home-made gift when wrapped in brown paper and tied with string.

Instead of splashing out on too many festive adornments, we're favouring a natural approach to decorating our homes, with foraged twigs and branches taking centre stage in our story *'Tis The Season* on page 122. We have the same philosophy in *Craft Works* on page 156, where fabric makes a sustainable alternative to wrapping paper, and party favours come in the form of tiny dried flower bouquets at each table setting. I also love our spotlight on Happy Crackers on page 173, a small, eco-friendly business that started just a year ago and produces handmade crackers in beautiful Liberty fabrics, designed to be used year after year.

Talking of small businesses, I am immensely proud of this year's Gift Guide on page 17, which is filled entirely with independent brands. It's always a labour of love (I'm sure the team finds my obsession with sourcing the perfect products exceptionally irritating, although they're gracious enough not to show it!). I feel passionate about *Red* supporting entrepreneurs, but selfishly, I also love buying things that everyone else won't have seen already, so for me, this is a win-win.

Alongside all this merriment, we're looking at some of the more complex aspects of the season, too. On page 42, writer Huma Qureshi reveals how she managed her festive guilt and navigated a scaled-back Christmas for herself and her family, and on page 60, we share some techniques to Christmas-proof your mind (along with breathing exercises on page 186 to help with stress levels, too). On page 66, author Annie Kirby shares her very personal and painful experience of being childless-not-by-choice, revealing how profound the loss feels at this time of year, and on page 73 we speak to the founder of the Good Grief Gift Co., which was created as a place to buy gifts for those recently bereaved.

Finally, because this time of year is all about believing, we talked to nine women who hold their faith close. Their words, on page 62, are a wonderful reminder that we can find a spiritual connection in so many places and so many ways.

Wishing you all health, happiness and wonder.

Sarah Tomczak

Editor Sarah Tomczak

LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT PRESENT? TREAT A LOVED ONE TO A *RED* SUBSCRIPTION. GO TO PAGE 88 FOR OUR GREAT OFFER.

EDITOR'S PICKS

'Stripes on stripes is my idea of heaven!'

CUSHION, £45, Katy Takla

HAT, £50, Navygrey

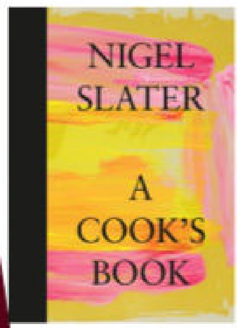
FLORAGY REFRESH CLAY FACE MASK, £11

CORDUROY DRESS, £310, Seraphina

'A deep berry shade, perfect for the season'

CASHMERE SWEATER, £378, Madeleine Thompson

BOYFRIEND COAT, £189, Mint Velvet



A COOK'S BOOK (Fourth Estate) by Nigel Slater, £30

'I ask for a cookbook every year'

'This boilersuit is an instant style update'

BOILERSUIT, £270, Essentiel Antwerp

RATTAN TRAY, £185, edit58

NOTECARDS, £4 for 10, Cambridge Imprint

CANDLES, £12 for a set of 2, Heather Evelyn

EARRINGS, £75, Loel & Co

SWIMSUIT, £190, Perfect Moment

SALT WORKS PAPYRUS & VELLUM CANDLE, £39

PHOTOGRAPHY: KATE DAVIS-MACLEOD, THE MASONS/TRUNK ARCHIVE, TIA BORGSMIDT/HOUSE OF PICTURES

Red

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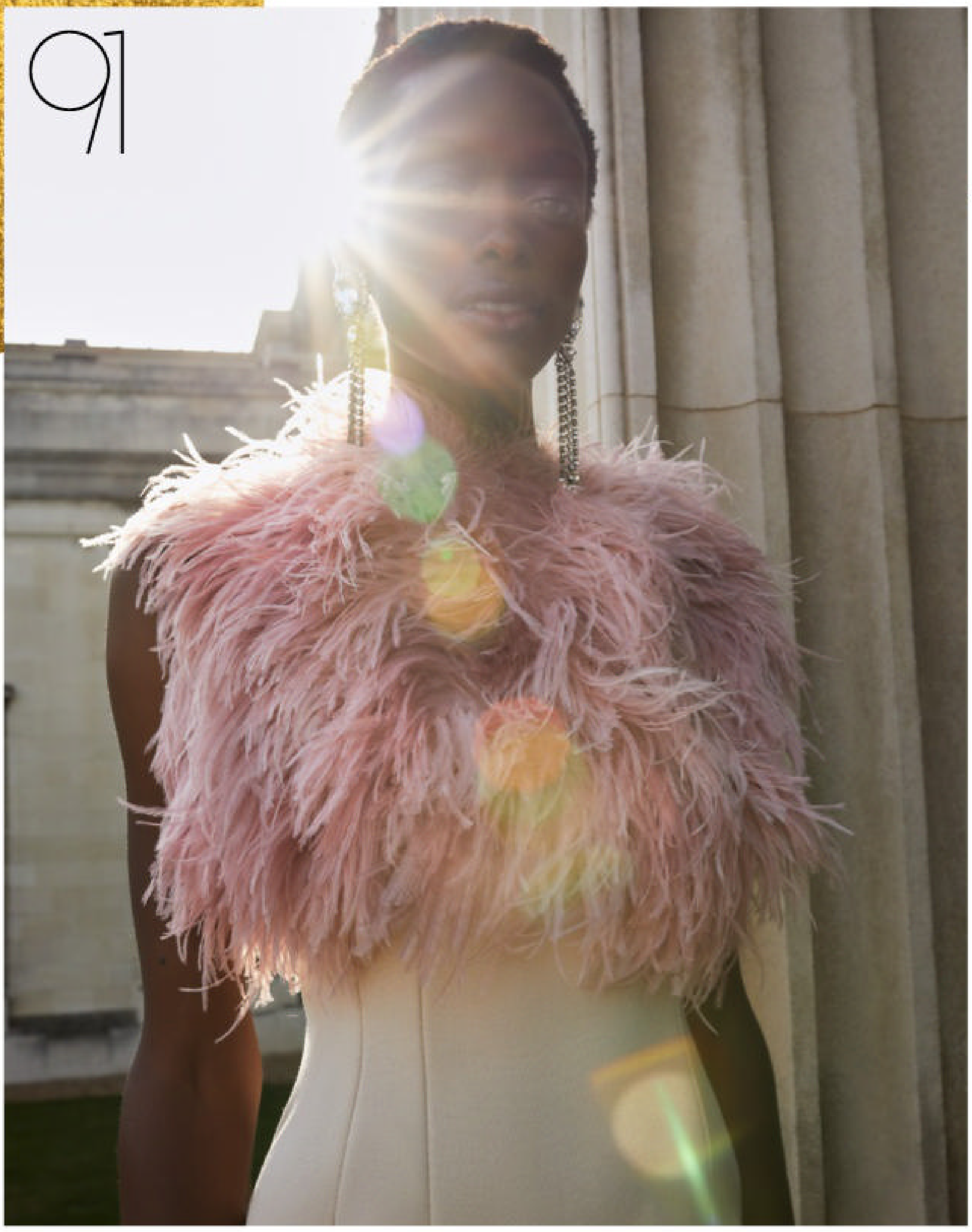
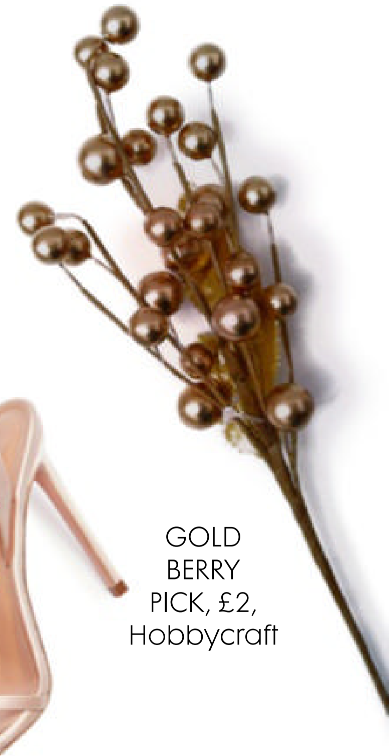


SHOES, £580, Aquazzura


GOLD BERRY PICK, £2, Hobbycraft

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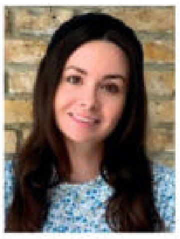
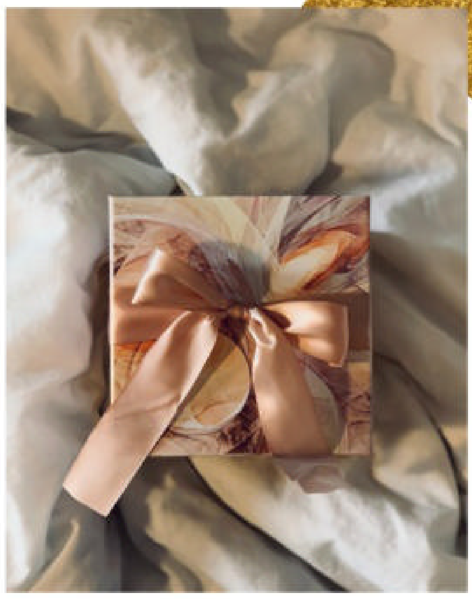
THIS MONTH'S COVER
Photography Kate Davis-Macleod **Creative Director** Philippa Williams **Model** Natasha Luwedde at Select Model Management **Styling** Oonagh Brennan **Stylist's assistant** Jodie Dunworth **Hair** Christos at One Represents using L'Oréal **Make-up** Ruby Hammer at Arlington Talent using Clarins **Prop styling** Michelle Lester **Production** Fiona Andrews **Dress** Dior **Shoes** Jimmy Choo. Thanks to the team at Scudamore's Punting Company

VERSACE pour femme DYLAN TURQUOISE
DYLAN TURQUOISE

The ONLINE *influencer*



HERE'S WHAT *RED* DIGITAL EDITOR FRANCESCA RICE IS LOVING OVER ON REDONLINE.CO.UK THIS MONTH



FESTIVE GIFTS FOR FOODIES

Delicious must-haves for cooks and gorgeous tableware for the food lovers on your Christmas list.

OUR PICK OF THE BEST CHRISTMAS PJs

From sumptuous silk sets to tartan classics.

FABULOUS FESTIVE FOOD

Genius ways to use your Christmas leftovers.

THE MOST STYLISH UK HOTELS FOR A WINTER MINI-BREAK

Dreamy spots for a festive staycation.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ADAM DUKE, MIA GOLIC/UNSPLASH, KRISTINA PETRICK/UNSPLASH, KATE WHITAKER, GETTY

Say it,
WRITE IT,
Share it.

If you have any news or views you'd like to see covered, we'd love to hear from you

ADVENTURE TIME

Choose your own adventure

Seven ways wild thinkers make the everyday extraordinary and enjoy a more compelling life

Our September issue encouraged readers to live life more adventurously and Amy Marsden found herself reflecting on what it means to make a big change in your late 30s and beyond: 'I adore *Red* magazine and I couldn't believe how the latest issue resonated with me; I could relate to just about every page. I loved the article on choosing your own adventure and how to make the everyday extraordinary. I am 40 and feel neither here nor there, not young nor old. I am at an age where I can still tweak my life if I want to; not in an unrealistic way, as in wanting to be a famous pop singer (I can't even sing a note!), but things like finding a job that is more satisfying to me, planning trips to new destinations or taking up a new hobby. At 36, after a somewhat colourful life, I decided to challenge myself and embarked on a degree. I completed it and am now midway through a Master's. I have worked full-time in a school, taken care of a house of five, struggled financially, but kept that incentive by reminding myself that this is my one life, that I need to live it the way I see fit. In her cover interview, Fearne Cotton mentioned the importance of noticing the small things when it comes to finding happiness and finding a place of belonging in yourself. I feel I have accomplished this in the last few years by finishing my degree, despite everything else life threw at me. Fearne talked of accepting your imperfections, that we all have them and it is only when we can truly embrace them that we can *be*. Your magazine takes a good fortnight or more to absorb and is filled with so much incentive. The whole issue really inspired me, so thank you.'

RED SOCIAL

@VikkiRossRates: 'It's okay to be selfish, conflicted and non-conformist. No one can be good all the time. Men are often valued for these "unlikeable" traits – so why not women, too?' @bellamackie in @RedMagDaily

@TracyWebb007: Just opened my @RedMagDaily and found a @TeenageCancer leaflet. I hope lots of readers are able to support – every contribution does make a difference to young people with cancer

@SocialAli_: This #NationalReadABookDay I'm reading Fault Lines by @EmilyItami thanks to @RedMagDaily & their frankly dangerous reading suggestions!

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OUR MAIL OF THE MONTH WINS...

…a goodie bag containing bestselling products from Swissline UK (swissline-cosmetics.co.uk), including Cell Shock Age Intelligence Resurfacing Water and Cell Shock Youth Inducing Cream, worth £276. This month's star letter prize goes to Amy Marsden, mentioned left. **Write to:** *Red*, House of Hearst, 30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ. **Email:** red@redmagazine.co.uk

COMPILED BY: MINI SMITH

GUCCI
GUILTY
GUCCI GUILTY
POUR HOMME
#ForeverGuilty

Gifting

verb: *something that is given, to show your affection*

For all the people you love – and to make your life a little easier – we have gathered the most marvellous presents we could find. Best of all? Each one is from an independent brand. Shopping small never looked so good.

PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL BELLAART

FOR HER

BRALETTE, £75, Coupure

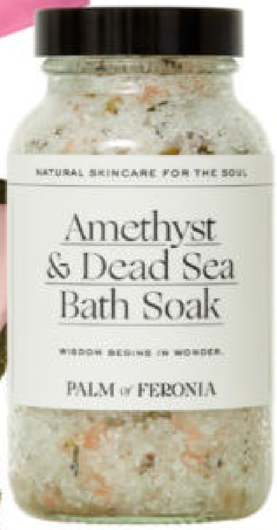
NECKLACE, £355, Zohreh V

UNFRAMED ART PRINT, £30, Soumati Studio

SHORTS, £85, Coupure

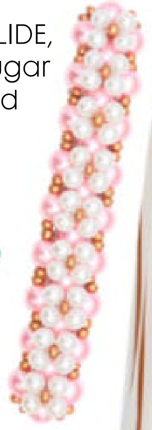
HAIR COMB SET, £14.99, Afroani

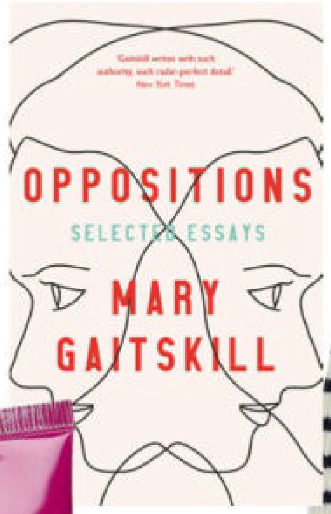
DRESS, from £285, Manimekala


BATH SALTS, £52, Palm of Feronia

CUSHION COVER, around £75, In Casa by Paboy

BRACELET £45, Wilson Jewellery


HAIR SLIDE, £12, Sugar Sand


OPPOSITIONS (Profile Books) by Mary Gaitskill, £16.99, out 11th November

JUMPER, £225, Charl

SLIPPERS, £249, A Piedi

BLOUSE, £205, Kelly Love at Khoeo

EARRINGS, £1,477, Star Animal Sundays

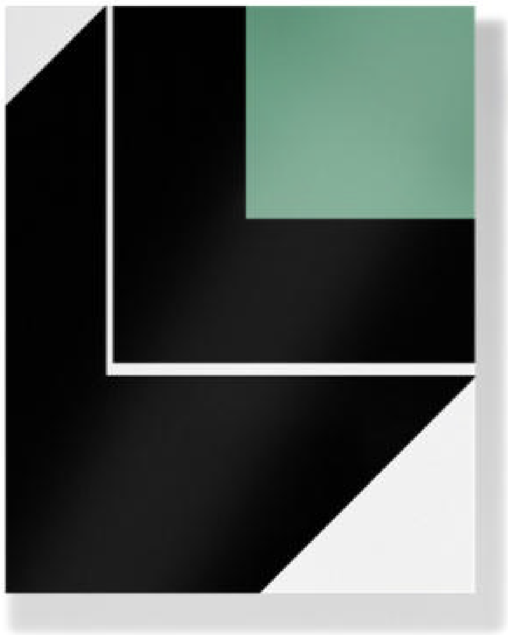
GLEN ROSA HAND CREAM, £12, Arran

LONDON FIELDS EAU DE TOILETTE, £90, Women in Mind

RING, £68, Loel & Co

MONOGRAM BASKET, £200, Rae Feather

FOR HIM


PAINTING, £95,
Tom Shone

TRIO OF SOAPS,
£35, Soapsmith

702
encens
lavande
bois de cachemire
BON PARFUMEUR
PARIS
702 EAU DE
PARFUM, from
£45, Bon
Parfumeur

Aaron Wallace
HAIR & BEARD
MOISTURISER, £13,
Aaron Wallace

BACKPACK,
£55, Kaft

PERSONALISED
PLIERS, £18,
Not-Another- Bill

TABLE LAMP,
£59, Lights &
Lamps

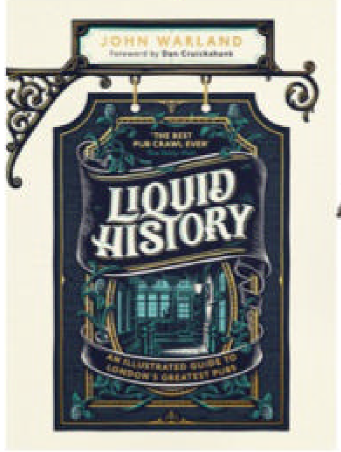
JACKET,
£250,
Wax
London

CUSHION, £45,
Weaver Green

JUMPER, £122,
The Croft House

THROW,
£65,
Hudson
Home

CLEAN
FORMULAS
HEALTHY
HANDS.
GROWN ALCHEMIST
PURIFY & PROTECT HAND CARE TWINSET, £45, Grown Alchemist


JOHN WARLAND
LIQUID HISTORY
LIQUID HISTORY
(Bantam Press) by
John Warland, £12.99

BOOTS, £370,
Imran Ibrahim
at Untapped
Creatives

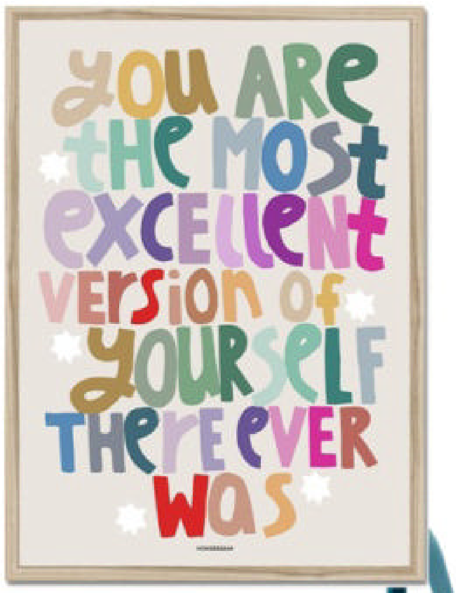
FOR KIDS

FLEECE VEST, £33, Organic Zoo

Claire Louise
HAIRBRUSH, £29.99*, Claire Louise

SOLDIER COSTUME (comes with tutu), £90, Meri Meri

SHOES, £43, Maison Eli Kids


YOU ARE THE MOST EXCELLENT VERSION OF YOURSELF THERE EVER WAS
FRAMED A4 PRINT, £35, Wonder & Rah

LITTLE DUTCH
CAR, £124.95, Little Dutch

HAT, £35, Smock London

ENJOY THE RIDE
HANDPAINTED WALL HANGING, £48, The Dartmoor Artist

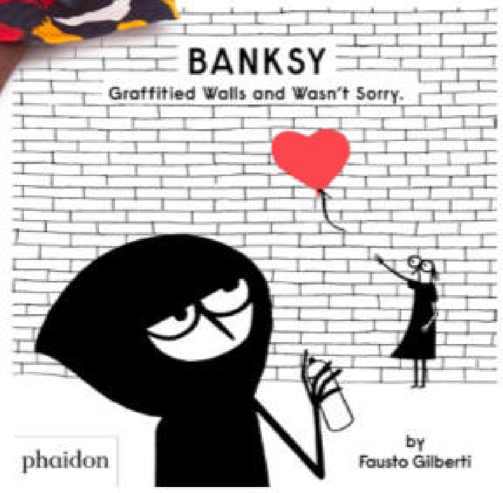
TREE DECORATION, £12.50, Meri Meri

DOLL, £45, Fela & Friends

RUG, from around £152, Hunarkar Handmade Treasures

PYJAMAS, £105, Amiki Children

WASHCLOTHS, £8 each, Liewood


BANKSY
Graffitied Walls and Wasn't Sorry.
phaidon
by Fausto Gilberti
BANKSY GRAFFITIED WALLS AND WASN'T SORRY (Phaidon), by Fausto Gilberti, £12.95

DRESS, £64, La Coqueta

TOY CASH REGISTER, £46, Cam Cam Copenhagen

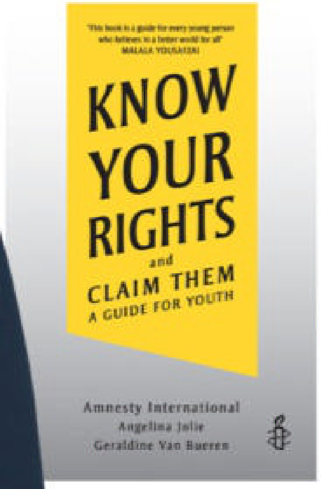
BOOTS, £54, Zig & Star

*CAN BE PERSONALISED

FOR TEENS

KEYRING, £19, Mabel Sheppard

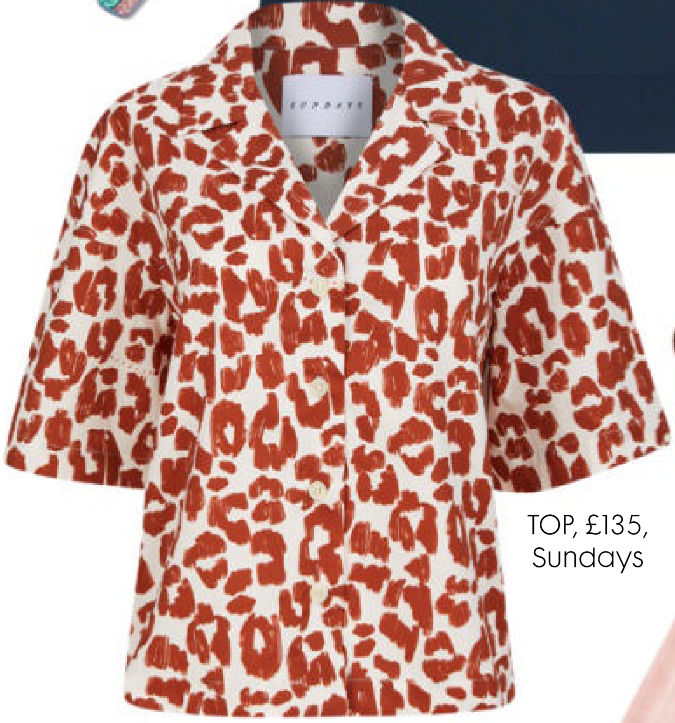
JUMPER, £35, Lemonpeel London


KNOW YOUR RIGHTS... (Andersen Press), by Amnesty International, Angelina Jolie, Geraldine Van Bueren, £7.99

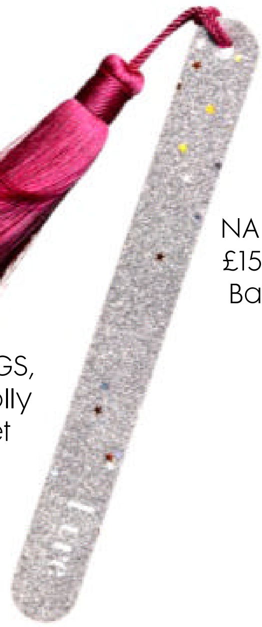
EYE BRUSH SET, £30, Otis Batterbee

SALTED CARAMEL MARSHMALLOWS, £4.25, The Naked Marshmallow Co

PERSONALISED HAIR BOW, £14, Tayla Tayla


TOP, £135, Sundays

EARRINGS, £45, Dolly Rocket


NAIL FILE, £15, Kure Bazaar

FACIAL ROLLER, £18, Kitsch

BRACELET, £120, Khoeo

BRONZE LOOKBOOK EYESHADOW PALETTE, £29.99, Naomi Sadé London

HOODIE, £255, Kapital

KNICKERS, around £65, Baserange

SHORTS, £85, Sundays

VANITY CASE, £80, LRM

BAG, £65, Mabel Sheppard

18+

WHAT IS
AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME -

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
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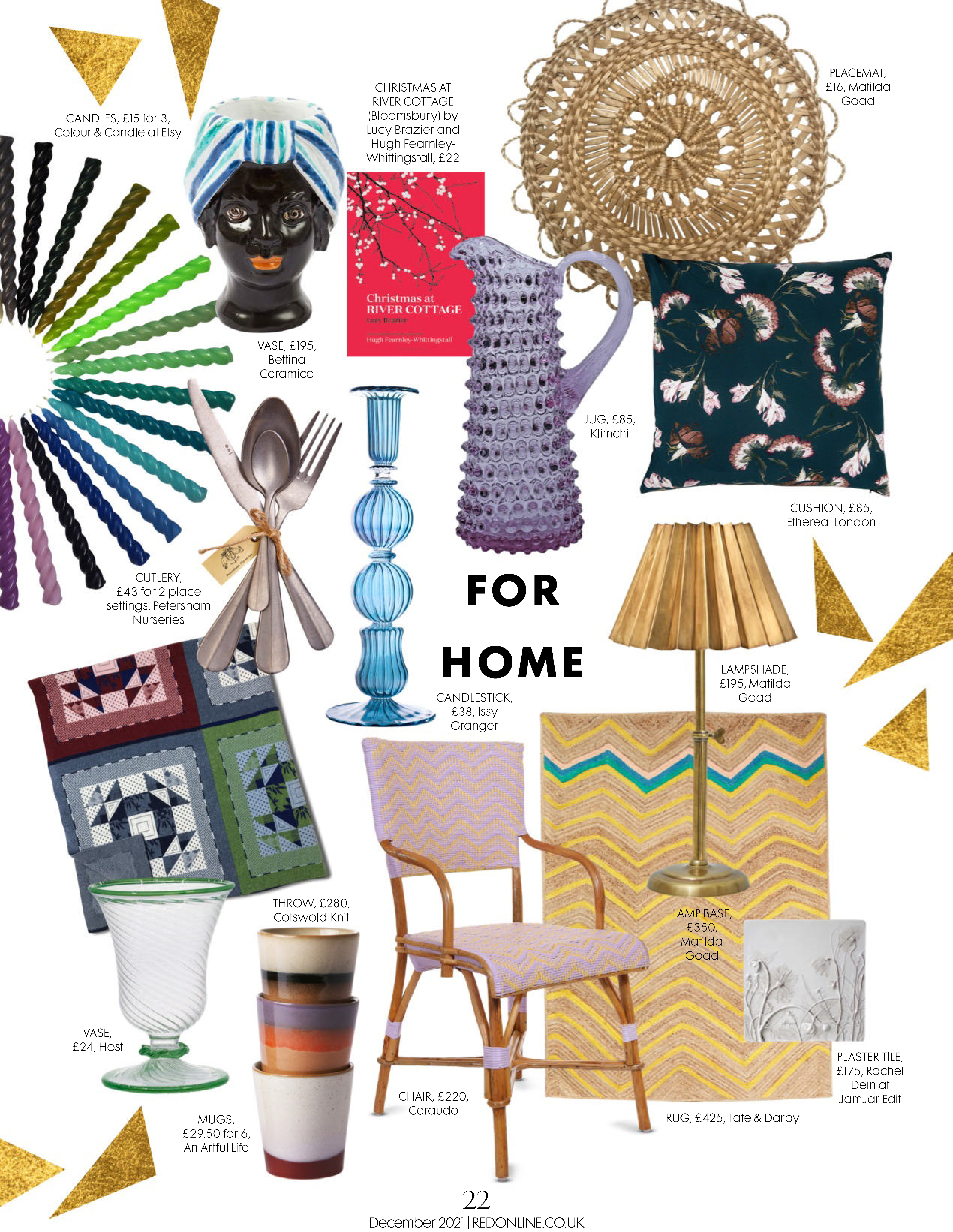
FOR HOME



CANDLES, £15 for 3, Colour & Candle at Etsy

VASE, £195, Bettina Ceramica

CHRISTMAS AT RIVER COTTAGE (Bloomsbury) by Lucy Brazier and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, £22

PLACEMAT, £16, Matilda Goad

JUG, £85, Klimchi

CUSHION, £85, Ethereal London

CUTLERY, £43 for 2 place settings, Petersham Nurseries

CANDLESTICK, £38, Issy Granger

LAMPSHADE, £195, Matilda Goad

THROW, £280, Cotswold Knit

LAMP BASE, £350, Matilda Goad

VASE, £24, Host

CHAIR, £220, Ceraudo

PLASTER TILE, £175, Rachel Dein at JamJar Edit

MUGS, £29.50 for 6, An Artful Life

RUG, £425, Tate & Darby

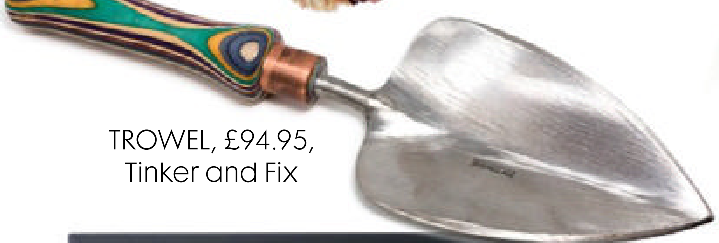
FOR GARDENERS

BAUBLES, from £45, Kitten Grayson

SONGBIRD TEA CUP, £38; CREAMER, £32 for 2, both Thyme

HARRIET BELLENIE
WELLNESS JOURNAL

JOURNAL*, £24.99, Mother of Pearl at Papier



TROWEL, £94.95, Tinker and Fix

HAMPER, £390, Petersham Nurseries

FRAMED DRIED FLOWERS, from a selection, Lydia Florence Designs at Etsy

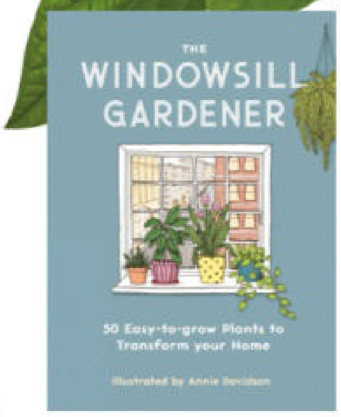
CUSHION, £140, Velvet Linen

daylesford GARDEN

GARDEN CARRIER, £25, Daylesford

2020 VINTAGE
Pelegrims
Hand Cleanser

HAND CLEANSER, £19, Pelegrims


THE WINDOWSILL GARDENER
50 Easy-to-grow Plants to Transform your Home
Illustrated by Annie Davidson

THE WINDOWSILL GARDENER (Michael O'Mara) by Annie Davidson, £9.99

BRAMBLEWOOD SOAP CO
Botanical Bloom
HERBAL BATH TEA

BOTANICAL BLOOM BATH TEA, £9.50, BrambleWood Soap Co

TRUG, £60, Thyme

POTTED PLANT, £26, Little Pots Lots of Love

AVOCADO VASE, £35, London Terrariums

SEED BOMBS, from £4.50 for 2, A La KArt Creations

*CAN BE PERSONALISED

FOR FOODIES

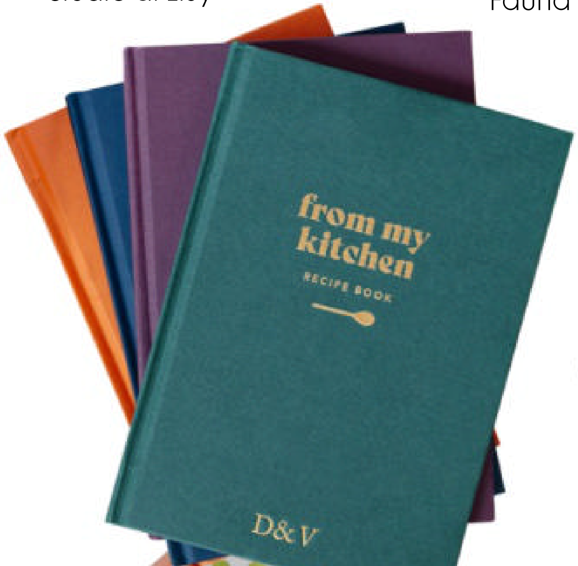
WREATH, from £40, Magnificent Marrow

CHOCOLATE COVERED DATES, £40, Daylesford

organic
GIN
MARMALADE
GIN MARMALADE, £4.99, Daylesford

Edi
SPIRITED EUPHORIA
NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRIT, £39.99, Edi Spirits

FAUNA
CHEETAH LAGER
WILD DOG IPA
PANGO TABLE BEER
BEER VARIETY PACK, £24 for 12, Fauna Brewing


from my kitchen
RECIPE BOOK
D&V
RECIPE BOOK*, £16.99, Betterday Studio at Etsy

PEPPER MILL, £48, Hudson Home

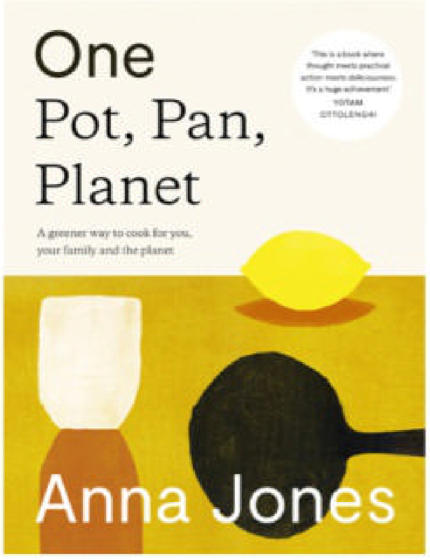
FRUIT BOWL, £42, LIGA

COASTER, £3, Katie Cardew

ICE BUCKET, £285, Matilda Goad

SERVING DISH, £58, Host

orange and clove
PLUM & ASHBY
CANDLE, £13, Plum & Ashby


One Pot, Pan, Planet
A greener way to cook for you, your family and the planet
Anna Jones
ONE POT, PAN, PLANET (Fourth Estate) by Anna Jones, £26

MEASURING SPOONS, £9 each, Greta-Mae

*CAN BE PERSONALISED

FOR HOSTS

COASTER, £8, Rebecca Udall

SOAPSMITH
CROSSTOWN
DIRTY SUGAR
HANDMADE SOAP

SOAP, £12, Soapsmith

GLASSES, £48 for 4, Kalinko

REBECCA TRACEY

REED DIFFUSER, £28, Rebecca Tracey

ROSE UNIACKE

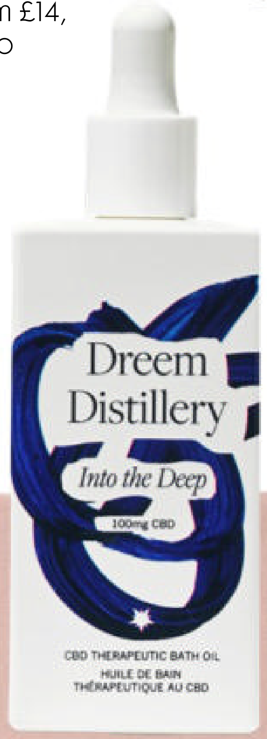
PLAYING CARDS, £108, Rose Uniacke

sublucéo
sublucéo

CANDLE, from £14, Subluceo

BOTTLE OPENER, £20, Rebecca Udall

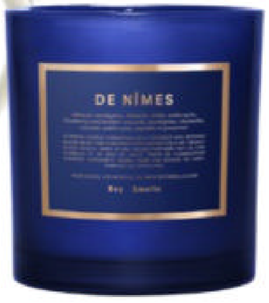
NAPKINS, £35 for 4, Oh Curio


Dreem Distillery
Into the Deep
100mg CBD
CBD THERAPEUTIC BATH OIL

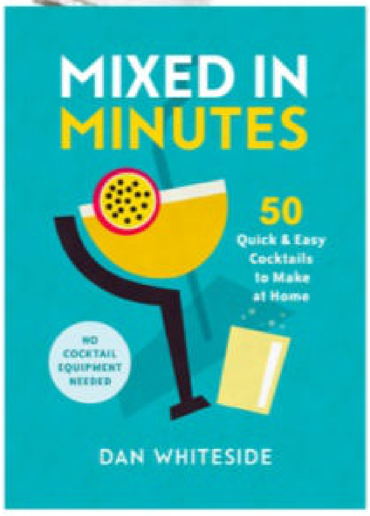
INTO THE DEEP BATH OIL, £65, Dreem Distillery

SALAD SERVERS, £22, Rose & Grey

JUG, £9.95, Artisan Homeware



DE NÎMES CANDLE, £45, Boy Smells


MIXED IN MINUTES
50 Quick & Easy Cocktails to Make at Home
NO COCKTAIL EQUIPMENT NEEDED
DAN WHITESIDE

MIXED IN MINUTES (Little, Brown) by Dan Whiteside, £12.99

TEA TOWEL, £12.50, Ellie Good

BLANKA
BLANKA
BLANKA
ARTISAN SOAP

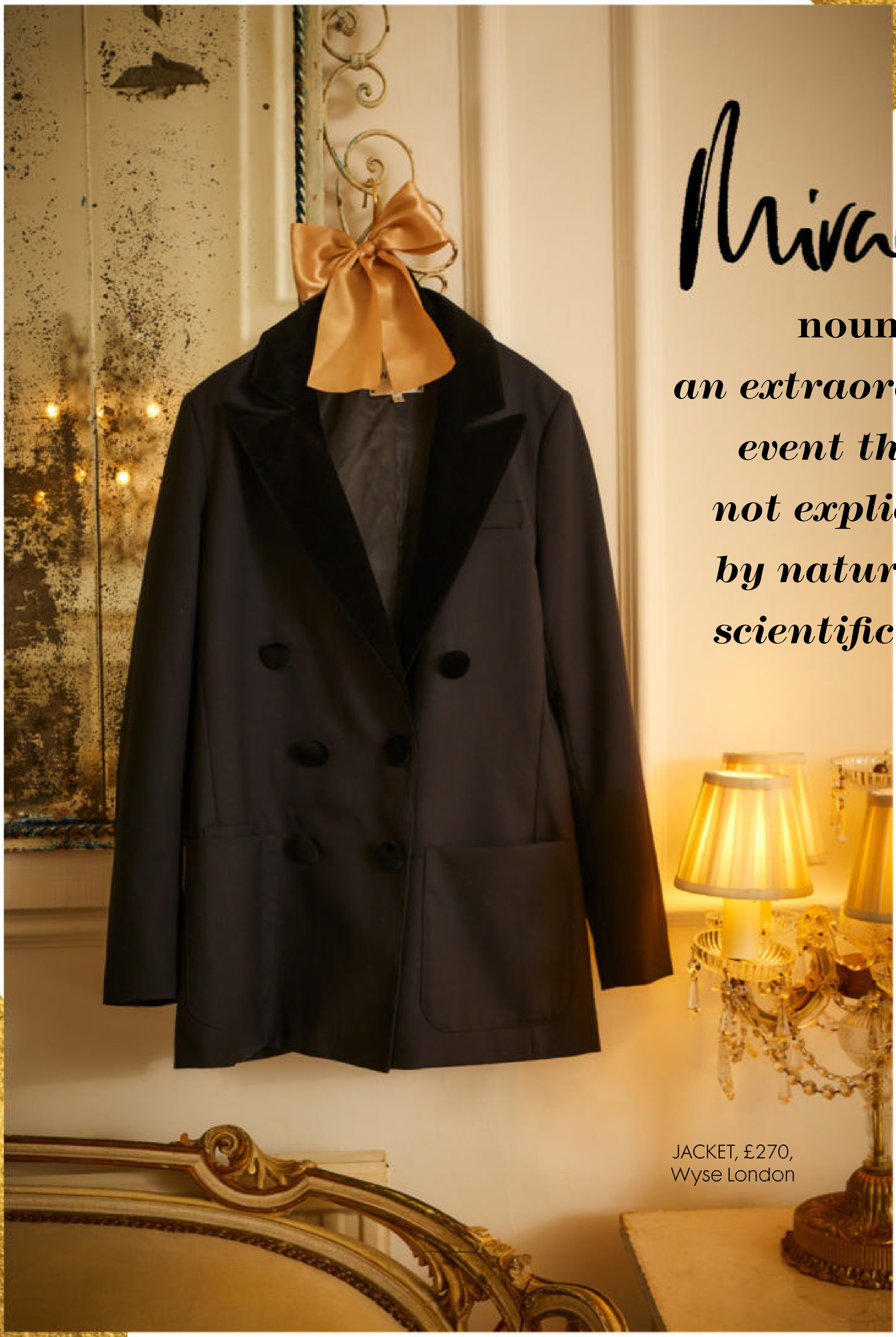
BESPOKE SOAP GIFT SET, £22.95, Blanka Soap

FLOWERS, £45 for 3, Cescamollys at Etsy

Lindt
LINDOR
Give the gift of bliss
Lindt
Lindt
LINDOR
MILK
IRRESISTIBLY SMOOTH
MILK
Lindt Master Chocolatier since 1845

Style

EDITED BY
OONAGH BRENNAN



JACKET, £270, Wyse London

Miracle

noun:
an extraordinary event that's not explicable by natural or scientific laws

Can anyone truly pinpoint what it is about a tuxedo jacket that makes it instantly elevate anything else it's worn with? Pair it with denim and your jeans suddenly become evening-appropriate. Throw it over your shoulders with a party dress to add a modern, masculine edge to satin or sequins. In a contemporary shade of midnight blue, with a black velvet trim, cult label Wyse London's interpretation of the classic tux is our favourite. Don't question its magic, just embrace it.

PHOTOGRAPHY: KATE DAVIS-MACLEOD

CARDIGAN,
£34, Next

BAG, £200,
Loueo

PYJAMA SET,
£212, Sleeper

SHOES, £215,
Russell & Bromley

DRESS, £259,
Baum und
Pferdgarten

ARMANI PRIVÉ FALL 21 COUTURE

PARTY READY

Celebrating? Shake up your look with these modern style pairings

COLLAR, £105,
Chylak

PASTELS + NEUTRALS

The fairy-tale charm of ruffles, feathers and heart-shaped jewels in baby pink, cool mint and icy blue are bringing a playful tone to partywear. This season, add bronze, cream and tan to give pale pastels a sophisticated edge.

BLOUSE,
£27.99, Zara

TRENCH, £49.99,
New Look

DRESS, £330,
Self-Portrait

BLAZER, £179,
Whistles

SKIRT,
£295,
Needle
& Thread

EARRINGS,
around £180,
Helena Thulin

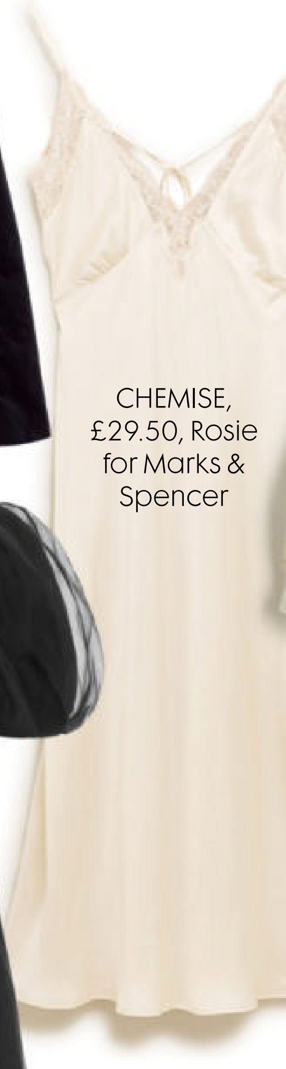
BARRETTE, £12,
Sugar Sand

SHOES,
£580,
Aquazzura

EARRINGS, £60,
Wilson Jewellery

JUMPER,
around £190,
babaà

BLAZER, £249, The White Company


CHEMISE, £29.50, Rosie for Marks & Spencer

EARRINGS, £255, Completedworks at Net-A-Porter

DRESS, £45.99, Reserved

Que La Vie est Belle
JUMPER, £295, Bella Freud

DRESS, £249, Coast

SKIRT, £50, River Island

SHOES, £199, L.K.Bennett

DRESS, £229, Whistles

NECKLACE £70, Wilson Jewellery

BOW, £65, Camilla King Millinery

TROUSERS, £350, Raey at MatchesFashion

WAISTCOAT, £295, Raey at MatchesFashion

CAMISOLE, £95, Sainted Sisters at Selfridges

JEANS, £180, 7 For All Mankind

BAG, £415, Yves Saint Laurent at Browns

Bianca Jagger

MONOCHROME + MIDNIGHT BLUE

Tux? Check. LBD? Check. Bows? Check. The timeless allure of a monochrome palette makes for effortless festive dressing. Champagne and navy add a subtle softness, especially when mixed with sultry silk camisoles, for the ultimate modern cocktail look.

ERDEM A/W 21

PRINTS + SPORTSWEAR

'Tis the season to go bold with clashing prints. Winter florals, Jacquard and brocade patterns bring a serious dose of opulence to the ultimate after-dark outfit. However, this trend is anything but fussy; mix your blouses with joggers, and silk PJs with heels to bring a contemporary, frivolous twist to traditional Christmas grandeur.

JUMPER, £89, Gant

EARRINGS, £50, Essentiel Antwerp

SKIRT, £175, Ganni

DRESS, £119.99, Toga Archives x H&M

COLLAR, £79, 46 Stitch

PYJAMA SET, £480, Olivia von Halle

JACKET, £220, Wyse London

Add a luxe biker edge to your brocade with a silk bomber jacket

DRESS, £320, Alemais

BAG, £520, Molly Goddard

SHOES, £375, Maria Luca

BLOUSE, £175, Ganni

TROUSERS, £150, ME+EM

EARRINGS, £90, Roxanne Assoulin at Net-A-Porter

SHOES, £120, Dune London

DRESS, £398, Free People x Anna Sui

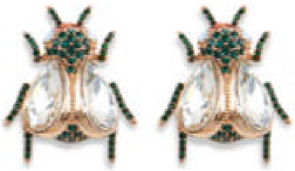
JUMPER, £377, Andersson Bell at Farfetch

SKIRT, £14, Matalan

SWEATER, £250, Chinti & Parker

BAG, £65, Dune London

BOOTS, £190, Arket


EARRINGS, £50, Essentiel Antwerp

SHOES, £995, Mach & Mach at Net-A-Porter

LIFE LINER QUICK 'N EASY PRECISION LIQUID LINER, £16, Huda Beauty

EARRINGS, £225, Susan Caplan

GLITZ + KNITS

From Alberta Ferretti's golden flares to Gucci's silver maxi skirt, sequins adorned, well, pretty much everything on this season's catwalk. Pair with cosy cashmere knits and alpine sweaters for a truly 2021 take on disco fever.

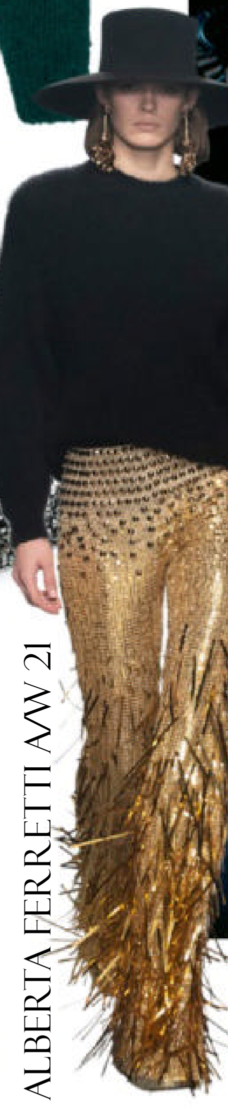
CARDIGAN, £185, Rouje

CARDIGAN, £185, Navygrey

TOP, £35, River Island

DRESS, £49.99, Zara

BAG, £29.50, Marks & Spencer


ALBERTA FERRETTI AW 21

Lauren Hutton

GUCCI AW 21

BROOCH, £215, 14 / Quatorze at MatchesFashion

TROUSERS, £109, Mint Velvet

SHOES, £635, Salvatore Ferragamo

JEWELS + LEATHER

Deep hues, rich velvet and a hint of sparkle are the newest spins on jewel tones, while leather brings an unexpected clash to tulle and velvet for an added touch of drama.

DRESS, £450, Seraphina London

DRESS, £550, Retrofête at Net-A-Porter

JACKET, £59, M&S Collection

SHOES, £29.99, Zara

DRESS, £199, Coast

ZIMMERMANN A/W 21

CALLING YOUR BLUFF EYESHADOW, £17.50, MAC

DRESS, £95, Sister Jane

SHOES, £299, Pretty Ballerinas

COAT, £339.99, Mango

DRESS, £180, Phase Eight

BLAZER, £315, The Frankie Shop at Net-A-Porter

DRESS, £420, Self-Portrait

EARRINGS, £109, Maje

SHOES, £55.99, Zara

COMPILED BY: JODIE DUNWORTH. PHOTOGRAPHY: IMAXTREE, GETTY

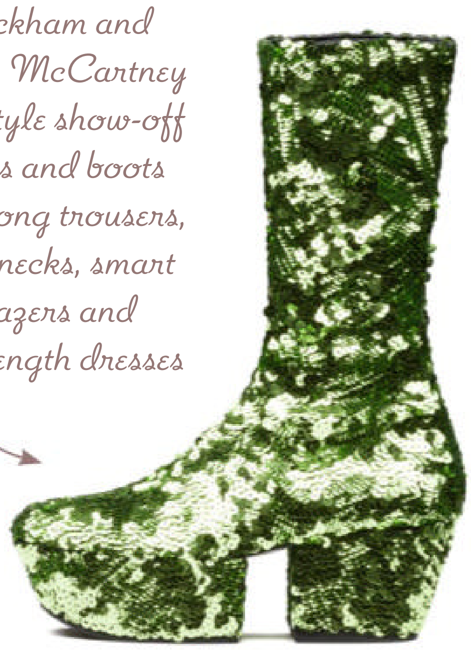
MARC-CAIN.COM
MARCCAIN

DANCING QUEEN

Attention-seeking metallic platforms, glitterball boots and stack heels conjure a dazzling new 1970s mood

£79, Karen Millen

Take a cue from Prada, Victoria Beckham and Stella McCartney and style show-off shoes and boots with long trousers, high necks, smart blazers and mid-length dresses



£1,300, Prada

£310, Loeffler Randall

When the party's over, wear high-voltage boots beneath tailored separates, denim and cosy knits for the quintessential high-low mix

£655, Victoria Beckham

£29.99, Zara

£675, Jimmy Choo

£48, River Island

ZIMMERMANN A/W 21

£150, Ted Baker

£120, Boden

Slip on a shimmery sock to bring unexpected glamour to classic black heels

£930, Aquazzura

£580, Miu Miu at Net-a-Porter

COMPILED BY: LUCY TRIEVNOR. PHOTOGRAPHY: IMAXTREE.COM

ALL THE TRIMMINGS

Delicate pastels, feathery frills and sparkling crystals are the modern way to do partywear

PEARL NECKLACE, around £390, Timeless Pearly

LANVIN A/W 21

COLLAR, £50, Ganni

BAG, £1,150, Chloé

Olivia von Halle's new slipper collection includes sequins, tassels and frou-frou feathers

MULES, £595, Olivia von Halle

HAIR TIE, £95, Erdem

HAIR CLIPS, £185, Tilly Thomas Lux

MULES, £460, Aquazzura

Soft-hued Ladurée tones add a sweet edge to your evening look

MIU MIU L'EAU BLEUE EAU DE PARFUM, £52

Accessories in warm tobacco balance out frothy pastel shades

HEADBAND, £47, Loeffler Randall

MULES, £24.99, H&M

SHOES, £284, Loeffler Randall

HAIR SLIDE, £275, Lanvin

EARRINGS, £10, Accessorize

Chains on ladylike pouches give a cool twist to party bags

BAG, £120, & Other Stories

SHOES, £59.99, Zara

COMPILED BY: LYNDA BELL. PHOTOGRAPHY: IMAXTREE.COM

MAX MARA FOR EVER

As Max Mara celebrates 70 epic years with an exciting anniversary collection, we reflect on the label's signature heritage pieces and iconic coats

The reversible anniversary coats

Might the Max Mara camel coat be the holy grail of all camel coats? Ever since the legendary 101801, a double-breasted wool coat with kimono-style sleeves that debuted in 1981, followed a decade later by the iconic double cashmere belted wrap Ludmilla in 1992, a Max Mara coat has been on the wish list of fashion-conscious women around the world. They are true classics that sit seamlessly in any well-curated wardrobe; a symbol of simplicity and lasting modernity. Glance at supermodel Kim Williams wearing the original big-shouldered, wide lapel style in the 1986/87 campaign and you'd be forgiven for thinking it was shot yesterday. Likewise, look to Linda Evangelista in the 1990s, Stella Tenant in the 2000s and Gigi Hadid in 2015 and they all look just as relevant and desirable to our 2021 eyes. Each of their signature coats could work effortlessly in our wardrobes right now, showing a reassuring air of continuity – the true hallmarks of an icon.

To celebrate its 70-year ascent, Max Mara has designed an anniversary collection, championing the 101801 alongside other legendary pieces that have become synonymous with the brand. The 'it' teddy coat loved by Rita Ora and Kim Kardashian, elegant tailoring, cool knitwear and accessories have all been reworked with those little modern twists that have kept the label so on point throughout the years. The anniversary coats are reversible thanks to techno-nylon lining, the brand's signature tailoring is re-imagined in graphic tartan and tattersall checks, Aran knits are slouchy and oversized, and the famous polished Anita tote is repurposed in a playful shearling.

The brand has come a long way since its launch in 1951, when founder Achille Maramotti set his sights on 'dressing the wives of doctors and local notorieties'. Nowadays, the women are empowered and of notoriety in their own right, and they're still looking to Max Mara for those 'authentic, sometimes eccentric' investment pieces that signal quality, elegance and longevity – those forever buys to wear, love and pass on to the next generation.

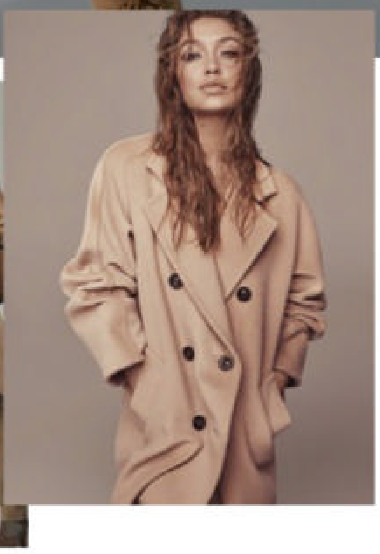
Max Mara's A/W 21 Anniversary collection

MAX MARA A/W 21

The brand has also launched a 7 for 70 T-shirt capsule collection

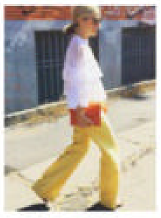
COAT, £3,895; Max Mara

BAG, £1415; Max Mara



From left: Just some of the iconic advertising campaigns from the mid-1970s to Gigi Hadid in 2015/2016

ON MY WISH LIST... *The* FASHION *influencer*



RED FASHION DIRECTOR OONAGH BRENNAN SHARES HER STYLE FAVOURITES

Any excuse to add to my ruffle shirt collection. And flat riding boots are winter-smart but practical.

BLOUSE, £75, & Other Stories

BOOTS, £355, 12 Storeez

Sézane's 1970s red sweatshirt would look great with my new knee-high boots and ruffle shirt.

SWEATSHIRT, £85, Sézane

A chunky toggle necklace looks great with T-shirts and cosy sweaters.

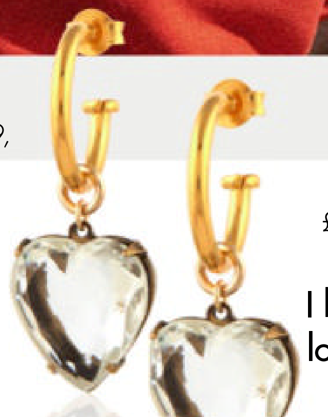
NECKLACE, £25, Orelia London

A velvet blazer is a great basic to have in your wardrobe. This fab Wyse London version also comes in red.

JACKET, £250, Wyse London

COLLAR, £59, 46 Stitch

It wouldn't be Christmas without a choir collar now, would it?



EARRINGS, £60, Wilson Jewellery

I love to layer lots of hoops, so I'll mix these with my classic gold styles.

JUMPER, £230, La Ligne at Net-A-Porter

La Ligne's cropped striped sweater is the holy grail of Bretons.

JACKET, £795, Marfa Stance

I love the slouchy silhouette of this reversible quilted jacket.

TRAINERS, £75, New Balance

This bag is the perfect size for days when I don't use my faithful shopper.

BAG, £245, See by Chloé

I've been considering sporty trainers for some time and these are the perfect mix of retro and running shoe.

RING, £580, Atelier VM

Atelier VM's ring collection is to die for – I've fallen for this chunky amethyst.

PYJAMA SET, £89, Yawn

Cosy new PJs are always on my wish list at Christmas.

FINISHING TOUCHES

SAINT LAURENT AT MATCHESFASHION, £570

PACO RABANNE, £390

ETRO AT MATCHESFASHION, £425

CHAIN REACTION

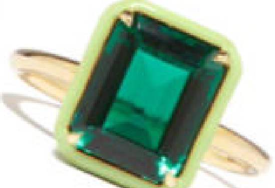
Spotted at the Paco Rabanne and Isabel Marant catwalk shows, metallic chain-link scarves are fun and frivolous with just the right amount of shimmer. Wear with relaxed suiting or a simple T-shirt for a polished party vibe.

Go full-on glam with 1990s-style chainmail

EMILY MORTIMER, £475

DINNY HALL, £450

SIF JAKOBS, £199



ALISON LOU AT MATCHESFASHION, £1,300

QUALITY TREATS

Who can resist the allure of a shiny new cocktail ring? In a dazzling array of sweetie-wrapper shades, these beautiful baubles will bring a touch of old-school glamour and style to every party.

MINKA JEWELS, £350

SHYLA LONDON, £58

EARRING, £1,782

BRACELET, £160

NECKLACE, £1,720

EARRING, £1,360

RING, £585

BRANDS WE LOVE: KINRADEN

Founded by architect and designer Sarah Müllertz, Danish jewellery brand Kinraden is dedicated to creating beautiful, timeless pieces in a sustainable manner. Its founding philosophy is: ‘Nature is in our hands and everything we touch will inevitably touch the lives of others’. These modern mini pieces of art are crafted in purified, recycled gold and silver with a sculptural simplicity that you’ll want to wear time and again.

BUTLER & WILSON, £38

ANTHROPOLOGIE, £48

LANVIN, £748

JENNIFER BEHR AT MYTHERESA, £281

MARNI AT MYTHERESA, £298

GO GLITZY

They were big, they were bold and they stole the show at the Saint Laurent A/W 21 presentation. Perfect for the festive season, supersize diamanté earrings give a twinkle to party frocks, add glamour to a tux jacket and make everyday outfits feel, well, newer and a whole lot sparklier.

COMPILED BY: JO ATKINSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY, KATE DAVIS-MACLEOD

AUSSIE

Hair sending **SOS signals?**
Lucky for you, Aussie has the perfect thing that's sure to **hit the spot.**

Namely, **Aussie 3 Minute Miracle.**
With a blend of **Australian** superfoods.

A quick squeeze of this **deep conditioning treatment** is the ultimate **lifesaver** to give your dry & damaged hair a **kiss of life** when most in need.

And boy do they deliver on **deep conditioning.**
How deep? We suggest you have a lifeguard on standby.

SQUEEZE IT !
AUSSIE
SOS
3 MINUTE
MIRACLE
DEEP TREATMENT
With a blend of
Australian Bush Food.

REWRITING TRADITIONS

After years of people-pleasing, Huma Qureshi decided to shake off the festive guilt and stay home on Christmas Day. And she hasn't looked back

When I was growing up, my Pakistani family never particularly celebrated Christmas. After I married, I thought it fairer to spend the holidays with my husband's English family instead, for whom Christmas appeared more traditional. And so, we fell into a routine; Christmas week with my in-laws, then stopping at my mother's for New Year.

After our children were born, we pretended it wasn't that hard to make the six-hour round trip to my in-laws' rural cottage with a newborn and a toddler. We were bone-weary, but everyone expected us. Though it was always a joy to see them, the broken nights were more difficult away from home and it was harder to console our small children. By the time we reached my mother's house, our sons were usually overtired and I was, too, which didn't make for a pleasant stay. I often thought how much easier it would be to spend the holidays at home; to go out for hot chocolates, see friends or stay in and watch movies in our pyjamas. I daydreamed about what our own version of Christmas might have looked like for us, but I felt selfish for it. My husband had done so much to embrace my family, converting to my religion, that I thought the least I could do was spend Christmas in the countryside with his parents.

One winter, four years ago, we moved house and began renovating. Then I found out I was pregnant again and was more exhausted than I'd ever been. As Christmas approached, both our mothers asked when we were coming. I sighed and wished aloud we could stay home. 'Me too,' my husband said. We exchanged a look. We realised, a little ashamed, that my pregnancy and the renovation gave us a reason not to go.

And so, we tactfully texted our mothers, agonising over what to say so as not to cause upset, which was the last thing we wanted. We apologised and explained, proposing dates they could come to visit instead, which seemed easier than us travelling. I felt relieved but also terribly guilty. But to my surprise, if our mothers were disappointed (and they probably were), they chose not to show it. They both said they understood. And it was as simple as that.

'It was far more restful than going away'

That first year we didn't go away; we bought a tree, seeing as we'd finally be home long enough to tend to it, and I loved watching our children decorate it. On Christmas Day, we had pancakes for breakfast, and in the afternoon piled all the duvets on the sofa for films and popcorn. Our children didn't complain about wanting to come home because we already were. It was far more restful than going away, and it's this cosiness that makes staying home for Christmas so appealing.

There are small things we like to do each year, such as bath bombs and watching *The Snowy Day* (the kids) and something by Noah Baumbach (us), but I don't feel the need to hold them fast for the sake of tradition. There is something rather freeing in not putting expectations on ourselves for things to be a certain way.

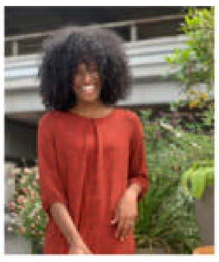
Now, we have a new pattern of seeing my in-laws before Christmas and my family afterwards. Over the years, my guilt has lessened. We see our families as much as we can anyway and these times feel more meaningful than getting together just because everyone else is.

Some of my friends wish they could do the same. Many expressed relief at being able to be 'just them' at Christmas last year in lockdown, but don't know how to justify it again. But just because you want to stay home for Christmas doesn't mean you don't love your family. It's just that the end of the year is draining and it can be tiring making a long, tedious journey, when perhaps all you want is to hunker down in the comfort of your own home.

There is so much pressure around Christmas living up to expectations, but it can be whatever you want it to be. So to anyone who doesn't have the energy to see relatives, or just likes the idea of settling in for the season, don't feel bad for putting yourself first. It's totally fine to, especially after the year we've all been through.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

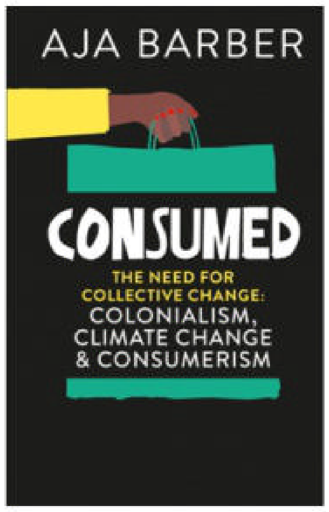
ON MY WISH LIST... The ECO influencer



OUR COLUMNIST, SUSTAINABLE STYLIST ARMELLE FERGUSON, SHARES HER LATEST DISCOVERIES FOR GREENER LIVING

CRAFTY CHRISTMAS

I feel like I never take the time to be creative. I write a lot, but I never make anything with my hands. Hobbycraft is changing that for busy people, with its thousands of in-person and online workshops. From sewing to brush lettering to candle making, it also offers kids' sessions, so everyone can get creative this festive season. Workshops from £5 at classbento.co.uk/hobbycraft/home


AJA BARBER
CONSUMED
THE NEED FOR COLLECTIVE CHANGE:
COLONIALISM, CLIMATE CHANGE & CONSUMERISM

CHAPTER FOR CHANGE

As a Black woman in fashion and sustainability, I'm hugely inspired by writer, stylist and eco-advocate Aja Barber. So I'm excited by her book, *Consumed* (Octopus, £15). Her wit and upfront attitude are perfect to tackle issues such as fast fashion, race and change. An absolute must-read.

LET'S BE GIN

Wondering what to pour on Christmas Eve? I'll go for Bullards Strawberry and Black Pepper Gin. The sweet and spicy flavour will marry beautifully with my vegan menu of roast potatoes, sautéed greens with caramelised onions, smoked sesame tofu and pumpkin pie. And I'll keep the bottle, since the firm also provides refill pouches that it recycles. Bullards Strawberry and Black Pepper Gin, £40, bullardsspirits.co.uk

THE GIFT OF GIVING

Christmas is one of my favourite times of year, for all the usual clichés – family, food and everything that comes with it. But this is not the case for everyone; that's where giving and true love come in. And there are many ways to help those who need it…

Most UK children's hospitals run schemes where you can send Christmas gifts to sick children. Contact your local children's hospital charity for donation guidelines to put a smile on a little one's face this Christmas.

With Reengage UK, you can help a lonely elderly person this Christmas. Become a call volunteer and provide someone with joy and friendship through meaningful conversations. ***reengage.org.uk***

Write Christmas cards with Octavia. After the isolation we've all endured over the past two years, receiving a thoughtful Christmas card can make a real difference to an older or isolated person's life. You can become a Christmas card writer by following the instructions on the website. ***octaviafoundation.org.uk***

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHARLIE McKAY, HELENA HERTZ & JOANNA KOSINSKA/UNSPLASH

SWAROVSKI

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Joy

noun:
a state of
happiness
or felicity

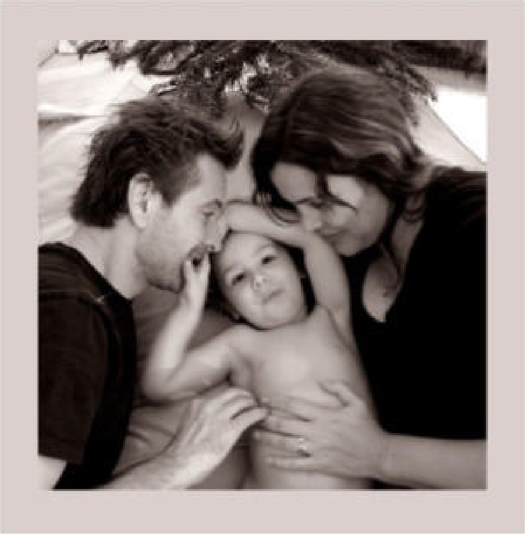
TRADITIONS SHARED, PEOPLE MISSED, SELECTION BOXES ON THE SOFA AND MARIAH ON REPEAT. FIVE PEOPLE SHARE WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO THEM

'PEOPLE SAY CHRISTMAS IS COMMERCIAL, BUT I STILL FIND IT A TIME OF WONDER'

By author, journalist and war correspondent, Janine di Giovanni

I'm the youngest of seven, and Christmas was always a big deal for our large Italian-American family. We used to have the Feast of the Seven Fishes, a Neapolitan tradition in which you eat seven different fish dishes. My grandparents passed the tradition to my parents, my parents gave it to me, and I've given it to my son, Luca. I've always said to him, 'Will you have the Seven Fishes?' and he says, 'Yes!' In fact, sometimes my mother says, 'Let's just have two this year,' and Luca gets really upset. He says, 'But it's supposed to be seven' – and I love that.

When I was very small, my Italian grandfather lived in a wonderful, multi-generational house. My aunt and uncle lived on the top floor, my cousins downstairs. We ate Christmas Eve dinners on long tables with lace tablecloths, with groaning platters of exquisite Italian food – salted codfish, delicacies, pastries – that had taken weeks to prepare.



Janine with her son, Luca, and his father at Christmas in 2004

The concept of Advent is a lovely tradition because it's a time of waiting, but also of accepting; of learning to be patient and still. For me, Christmas always started with Advent. I'd light an Advent wreath, have a calendar, make cookies with my mother… and I've kept up those traditions throughout my life.

Wherever I am in the world, I always go to Mass. If you feel lonely, or disconnected, it's a way to realise that you're never alone, that there are always people who are part of a congregation who are with you.

In 1992, I went to mass on Christmas Eve in Sarajevo, where I was working during the siege. There was a risk the church would be bombed, so the time wasn't announced. People sang *Silent Night* in Serbo-Croat, and soldiers from the frontline came to receive Holy Communion in their battered uniforms. They were really suffering because it was freezing on the frontline and they were outnumbered by heavy tanks. But seeing people come together in their most desperate hour to worship was one of the most moving events of my life. I called my father on a satellite phone and tried to describe it to him, but it cost $50 a minute, so I could really only say: 'Merry Christmas.' It was one of only two years when I wasn't with my family and I remember feeling desperately sad, but also realising that this was a memory that would always be burned in me, like the Christmases of my childhood when I would run downstairs in my pyjamas and open my presents. Or, even though I didn't know it yet, the first Christmas after my son was born, when I dressed him in a velvet suit and gave him his first stocking with his name sewn on. I see my life as a tapestry and each Christmas is another stitch.

People say Christmas is commercial, but I still find it a time of wonder. It reminds me of the pleasure of small things: buying beautiful ribbon, wrapping a present in beautiful paper. When I was little, my parents took us to a glamorous department store and we would each buy a Christmas tree ornament and my mother would mark the year on the back. I did the same thing much later, when I was living in my single-girl-flat in Notting Hill. Then, when I moved to Paris, every year I took my son to the wonderful department store Le Bon Marché to buy an ornament, too. In 2004, I bought one and wrote on it: 'First baby, first Christmas'.

I know that, in the future, my Christmases will change again. My son is 17 and next year, he'll go to university. When kids go to university, they fly. They're always with you, but they fly into their own lives. So I imagine this will be our last Christmas of his childhood. And my mother, amazingly, is over 100 now. We say to her, 'You have to make it till Christmas,' but maybe next year, she won't be here. It's why – especially since Covid – I try to use this time of year to look at the things I have, instead of what I've lost.

Christmas is a time to take stock of your life and your internal landscape and where you're going next. It's like the past, the present and the future all come together. We can reflect on the gifts we've been given – our families, our careers, our health. I've also been given a gift of a profession that has shown me the darkest sides of life. My life hasn't been easy, but I know it has been rich and rewarding. And the ability to remember that at Christmas, to think, look at all I have – that is the greatest gift of all.

The Vanishing, (Bloomsbury) by Janine di Giovanni is published on 9th December

'I AM EXPERIENCING SECONDHAND THE CHILDHOOD CHRISTMASES I MISSED OUT ON'

By journalist, broadcaster and screenwriter, Sarfraz Manzoor

My earliest Christmas memories are of being a young boy at school and hearing friends discussing what presents they were getting. I remember feeling jealous and excluded. I grew up in a Muslim family in Luton and my family did nothing for Christmas: no trees, no cards and no presents. I grew up believing Christmas was not for people like me.

My feelings about Christmas changed when I got married and had children. My wife, Bridget, grew up in a Christian family in Scotland; Christmas meant a lot to her and it was important that the traditions she had grown up with – having a Christmas tree, attending carol services, giving and receiving gifts – were passed on to our children. Through Laila and Ezra, I am experiencing secondhand the childhood Christmases I missed out on.

What makes Christmas meaningful for me now is for my children to spend time with their grandparents in Scotland. Every year, my father-in-law will write a children's story, print it out and bind it and send it to us. Laila will read one chapter of the story every evening for the fortnight before we visit Scotland and then, when we arrive, her grandfather will read the story to her. For Ezra, he will have made a board game which we all play together. Since my family in Luton don't mark Christmas, we have spent every Christmas in Scotland – until the pandemic. So it will feel especially meaningful to get the chance to return this year.

Bridget and I will usually go to a morning carol service in the local community hall with the children, who will be pestering us to let them unwrap their presents. When they can no longer wait, we gather in the living room and open them before an early afternoon Christmas lunch, which is usually vegetarian. There will be phone calls from relatives and friends throughout the afternoon, while the children gorge themselves on chocolate.

The song that encapsulates it all for me is Last Christmas by Wham!. I remember it the first time round as a teenager, but it is a song that Laila and Ezra also really like. It feels both funny and moving to hear them singing it, but mostly I feel grateful they have good taste in music.

I want to teach my children that Christmas is not just about getting presents. Having come from a family that had very little money and also didn't celebrate Christmas, I find my children's obsession with consumerism exhausting. I tell them that not only did I never get any Christmas presents, I also never got any birthday presents, and I try to encourage them to feel grateful for all that they have. I tell them all this, but I am not convinced they are listening.

It is important to me that my children appreciate that they have both Muslim and Christian heritage; Bridget and I work hard to try to make Eid feel as special as Christmas. We decorate the children's hands with henna and buy Indian sweets. Just as we visit Bridget's family for Christmas, so we visit my family on Eid. And in the same way that we feast on Christmas lunch, we also have a massive Eid banquet. I really want my children to feel that they don't have to choose between their Muslim and Christian heritages, and they can have the best of both.

The thing I find hard is that I am the one person in my family who was not brought up to feel excited about Christmas. I am consoled however, by seeing how excited the kids are and by the fact that I can give them more joy in their childhood than my parents were able to give to mine. And by knowing that although Christmas may sometimes be a struggle for me, it is delightful and effortless for my children.

Sarfraz shares the joy of Christmas with his wife and children

'THE WORLD WON'T END IF YOU DON'T MAKE YOUR OWN BREAD SAUCE'

By bestselling author Marian Keyes

In some ways I am a Christmas curmudgeon. The amount of work that is piled on women – the emotional and physical labour – can be so stressful. People race around in a steam-filled kitchen shrieking: 'The Brussels sprouts!' or feel pressure to make their houses perfect. The run-up can be terrible, too – the traffic, the to-do lists. Actually, things don't have to be perfect. It's not about worrying about the dryness of the turkey. What last year showed us is that Christmas is about the people. About family. The world won't end if you don't make your own bread sauce.

For me, the magic of Christmas kicks in around children. I have seven nieces and nephews, and seeing the way they believe in Santa and putting up my mother's tree with them; those things are so much fun. The tree is usually in a worse state after they finish decorating; they might break baubles or only decorate one side, so the tree ends up lopsided, but it doesn't matter. I get far more enjoyment out of seeing them do their own thing, than if they were to make it look perfect.

Last year somebody was on the news, saying that, despite Covid, Santa had been given a visa and could absolutely be working in Ireland, and that the children mustn't worry. It was such a sweet thing to do and it made a lot of adults happy, too. In moments like that, it's easy to connect back to the magic of being a child.

Christmas is about harking back to the past; sharing tins of chocolates and selection boxes. It's about nostalgia, not about the fancy stuff. I love to eat sweets with my mother and sisters on the sofa, watching something starring Harrison Ford. Now I have a niece who is 21, we initiate her into the sugar fest and Harrison Ford films, too, and it's wonderful. There are no constraints. So much of the time I judge everything that goes into my mouth. But at Christmas, I just think, 'Feck it, I'll eat what I want!' There's a freedom to it, a hiatus on judginess.

Family traditions at Christmas are important to Marian Keyes

Usually, I feel guilty about everything, but I'm able to detach from that at Christmas. I know that hosting would make me miserable, so I don't do it. That's the wonderful thing about being an adult; you can say: 'I don't want to do it, so I'm not going to.' I've never cooked a turkey, I wouldn't know how! And there are other people who are keen to do it, like my mum, who loves hosting in her house. Plus, her trifle is still the stuff of legends.

Family traditions are so important. Even the things we might think are a little irritating, they are the things that define us. Like having to put up with annoying relatives. They're not even really annoying; it's like a game we play with ourselves. We pretend that it's a burden, but it's not. Maybe as you get a bit older you realise that, because now I value people being themselves. I hope people realise that if they're in the middle of a terrible row on Christmas Day, they are not unusual. I don't think there are many families that don't have some sort of disagreement. And that really is okay.

My dad died three Christmases ago. It's not any more difficult at this time of year, because it's kind of difficult all the time. Actually, it's nice to be together, to remember him and honour him. Especially because he always went above and beyond at Christmas. It really mattered to him. He was so generous, he'd always be finding ways to exceed our expectations and show us that life was there to be lived. Even though they didn't have much money, he and my mum had a desire to make Christmas great, so it was a time of abundance. The presents would be under the tree in the front room, but it would be locked, so all five of us – me and my siblings – queued up outside. That reveal; the moment the door was unlocked and the tree was dazzling with tinsel and the lights – no matter how much we all looked forward to it, it was always more wonderful than we had ever anticipated.

A new edition of Rachel's Holiday by Marian Keyes is out 9th December 2021; her new book Again, Rachel (Penguin Michael Joseph) is out in February 2022

‘CHRISTMAS SLIPPERS ARE A MUST!’

By singer Gabrielle
As told to Ella Dove

I’m determined to make this Christmas my best one ever. The reason being that last year, I had Covid, so I spent Christmas in bed. I don’t remember much about the day itself, but my taste and smell were badly affected. The aroma of Christmas dinner made me nauseous and all I could manage was one roast potato – and I didn’t even finish that. As a mega Christmas fan, this was especially hard, but I’m lucky to have made a full recovery and I know I will make up for it this year.

For me, Christmas Day breakfast is smoked salmon, scrambled eggs and a glass of Champagne – a tradition my mum has passed on to me. My son, Jordan, 26, daughter, Patricia, 18, my mum and any other family members who are staying with us cook up a storm for breakfast. Our feast also includes gammon or bacon, mushrooms and many different sausages. My son laughs because my favourite sausages are the simple Richmond ones, whereas he prefers a fancier one with apple or herbs in it. But because it’s Christmas, we have both types.

I know some people enjoy Christmas Day in novelty onesies or pyjamas but, in my family, it’s all about getting glammed up to make the day feel even more special. The exception to this is Christmas slippers, which are a must! Last year, my son’s girlfriend bought us all giant elf-shoe slippers with little bells on, which were hilarious – even though the bells fell off and we kept finding them all around the house. When I was well enough to get out of bed, I remember sliding them on and that really boosted my mood.

Gabrielle is getting ready to beat her family at Connect 4!

Jenga and Connect 4 are my favourite games to play on the day. My son and I are both incredibly competitive. In fact, I used to take Connect 4 on tour with me, and my band refused to play it after a while, because if I didn’t win, I stopped talking to them!

Christmases are very different to when I was a child. For a time, my mum was a Jehovah’s Witness, which meant we didn’t have a tree and didn’t celebrate Christmas at all. But this was only for a few years and, generally, I remember Christmas with my mum and my three brothers as being noisy and fun. We didn’t have a lot of money, but we still had presents, and I have happy memories of us all being together.

Our house has an open-door policy on Christmas Day. We have turkey, lamb and chicken to appease everyone. If I hear of friends who might be feeling lonely, I’ll always invite them to pop along and join us. Very often, my son’s best friend will turn up, too, because he wants a second Christmas dinner after his meal with his own family!

Music is an important part of the festive season. We have a CD of Christmas songs that plays on repeat, and any Eighties track will get me up and dancing. A few years ago, I recorded a Christmas song called *This Christmas*, and it’s become tradition for my family to play that, which I find a bit embarrassing. For me, when it comes to Christmas songs, it’s all about Mariah.

I’m often on tour right up until Christmas. This year, I’m touring from November, so I’ll have to be very organised; it can be stressful getting back in time to sort out presents. Then I’m really looking forward to doing more shows in 2022 after the year we’ve all lived through.

This year, I’m not taking anything for granted. I often make New Year’s resolutions about losing weight or learning to play an instrument, but after the pandemic robbed us of so much, all I want for Christmas this year is family, food, fun and a merry, peaceful time. Just as long as no one beats me at Connect 4…

Gabrielle’s Rise Again tour runs from 3rd to 26th November. For details, go to ticketmaster.co.uk

‘RECIPES BRING BACK MEMORIES’

By restaurateur and MasterChef: The Professionals judge Monica Galetti
As told to Bella Evennett-Watts

In my household, Christmas begins on the first day of December, when we buy a real tree. Each year, my daughter begs me to put it up quickly so she can help with the baubles – although she always disappears halfway through! We’ll listen to *Snoopy’s Christmas*, which my parents used to play in New Zealand, where there’d be happy, beach-style music in the background. Even hearing *Three Little Birds* by Bob Marley & The Wailers takes me back to Christmas in the sun.

We open presents before breakfast. When I was a child, my dad would insist that my siblings and I ate breakfast first. The wait was always excruciating! Together with my three brothers and sister, we’d wake at the crack of dawn, then tiptoe and whisper as we snuck past our parents’ bedroom while it was still dark. Dad would usually find us poking holes in our presents, to guess what they were. He’d always make a big deal about making pancakes for breakfast or bacon and eggs – but we were so eager to open presents.

Monica Galetti has memories of sunny Christmases in New Zealand

For lunch, I’ll cook duck instead of turkey. The meal will be served using beautiful silverware, gifted to us by my husband’s grandmother, Mamy Gisele, who was given the set as a wedding present. I also use my mum’s serving bowls. She often used them at home, so they’re sentimental. I still remember her laughing when I asked her if I could have them one day. Now, using mum’s tableware at Christmas is a nice way of remembering her when she is no longer with us. It feels like she’s here in spirit.

I get homesick when spending Christmas in the UK. I was raised in Samoa until my family moved to New Zealand when I was a child, then I came to Britain in 1999. Samoan culture is all about having a large family, so Christmas back home is chaotic and so much fun. New Zealand is far away, but we try to return every few years.

Christmas Day in New Zealand involves a huge barbecue, with up to 30 family members, who take it in turns to host and everyone brings a dish. I’ll cook green-lipped mussels, which are native to New Zealand. My dad barbecues delicious turkey legs, my sister makes the most amazing chop suey, and my aunt makes an incredible pineapple pie. We take in all the flavours around the table, together. I appreciate it even more, because I know when I leave, it’ll be a long time before I get to savour their cooking again. For dessert, we’ll enjoy a pavlova – a native dish, of which the origins have long been disputed between Kiwis and Aussies. It’s a tradition I’ve brought home to the UK, too. I tend to make the pavlova in the shape of a wreath. The dishes we create are all meaningful; cooking these recipes brings back memories of lots of laughter and good food.

You’ll need to sleep for a week after attending a Samoan Christmas! There’s always too much food and plenty of leftovers to take home, but there’s still space for everyone to chip in. If someone is on a budget, we say: ‘Okay, you can bring the ice cream.’ Everyone wants everyone else to enjoy themselves and there’s no pressure on anyone if they’ve fallen on hard times. That’s what family is all about.

After lunch, we sing karaoke; everything from Mariah Carey to Wham!, and every song in between. Everyone always thinks they can hit the last note of *All I Want For Christmas Is You*! Karaoke is serious business in my family. When I took my in-laws to spend Christmas in New Zealand for the first time in 2019, they couldn’t believe how competitive everyone was. But they got involved – my father-in-law sang an Elvis anthem with me.

For me, Christmas Day is about appreciating one another. I love having time with my family, but it’s also important to wish others a merry Christmas, whether it’s on a group chat, or a phone call. It’s about showing empathy and kindness, while celebrating at the same time. I have a dear friend in her 80s who I invite to spend Christmas with me in the UK, so she’s not alone. Letting people know that you’re thinking about them is special.

PHOTOGRAPHY: DEAN CHALKLEY, MARK HARRISON/CAMERA PRESS, GETTY

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Fuel economy and CO$_2$ results for the Genesis GV70 range in Mpg (l/100km): WLTP Combined 27.9 (10.1)–40.0 (7.1), WLTP CO$_2$ emissions: 230–185g/km. Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO$_2$ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real-life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors, including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. 5-Year Care Plan includes collection and delivery for scheduled servicing. T&Cs apply. UK mainland only, excludes Northern Ireland.

‘Laughter is a form of

From making a triumphant return to live comedy to wooing audiences and critics alike in a third series of hit sitcom *Ghosts*, Lolly Adefope has had a whirlwind year. Here, she talks to Anna Bonet about moving forward from fear and what the future holds

When, earlier this year, Lolly Adefope stepped on stage for her first live comedy gig in over 12 months, she waved to the crowd, smiled and began her set, looking effortlessly confident in the process. On the inside, though, it was a different story. 'After so much gigging over Zoom, I think I was more nervous than I was when I first started out,' she winces. 'I really thought, "What if I've forgotten everything I knew before? What if I can never do comedy again?" I'd fallen out of practice and the nerves just filled me up. It was really scary.'

To Adefope's relief, it was like riding a bike and the gig was a resounding success. But it's candid confessions like these that make the actor, writer and comedian unusually relatable company for someone of her talents. She's only 31, but she's already become a familiar face on the British sitcom and panel show scene, having appeared on everything from BBC One's *This Time With Alan Partridge* to Channel 4's *Taskmaster*, while her role as the exuberant hairdresser Fran in Hulu's Emmy-nominated comedy drama *Shrill* has earned her a heap of fame in the US. How she keeps so many plates spinning is a great question, she says. 'It's all just one big, busy frenzy,' she admits. '2021 especially feels like a blur.' Her work for the year isn't quite over yet, as she'll soon be returning to our screens in a Christmas special of the gloriously fun BBC One sitcom *Ghosts*. Now three series strong, the comedy follows a couple who inherit a manor house, along with the eight characterful phantoms (one of these played by Adefope) who live inside it. As she talks from her home in east London – her bright yellow top in keeping with her sunny persona – it's clear that she is as excited about the upcoming special as I am. 'Like with all episodes of *Ghosts*, there are moments of hilarity and moments of pathos,' she grins. 'Jennifer Saunders guest stars, which is great because she was already a fan of the show, and the whole thing is just lovely and heartwarming.'

being true to yourself'

Adefope has starred as Kitty, the sweet, naive spectre of a Georgian noblewoman, since the show's debut in 2019. The most recent series, which aired this August, delved into her backstory for the first time and the episode was consistently picked out by critics as one of the best to date. While Adefope insists she doesn't read reviews, she does settle on to the sofa to watch it along with the rest of us. 'I annoy my boyfriend by constantly interrupting,' she laughs. 'I'm like, "So, the funny thing about this bit is…" and "We filmed this scene at 6am!"'

Each of the ghosts has their own unique and somewhat endearing quirks, with Kitty being determined to see the good in everything. I wonder if that's at all reflective of Adefope's own personality. 'It's funny; I'm actually quite cynical, but I'm also happy,' she says. 'So for example, if my boyfriend sees a good deal on cases of beer, my immediate reaction is to say, "It's just because they want you to buy more beer." But I'm never annoyed or sad about it. I'm just a happily negative person.'

Perhaps it's this combination of realism and positivity that has helped Adefope get to where she is today. Born and raised in Sutton, south London, with Nigerian parents, she says her desire to make people laugh simply came from 'growing up watching a lot of comedy on telly'. Series like Nickelodeon's *The Amanda Show* and *All That*, which she watched as a kid, gave way to Channel 4's *Peep Show* and *Green Wing* as a teenager. 'I just loved that kind of TV so much, and I always knew that one day I wanted to do what they were doing,' she recalls.

Her grand plan to go to Cambridge and join the famous Footlights drama society, which propelled the likes of Olivia Colman and Stephen Fry to fame, came to a grinding halt when she was rejected from the university. Instead, Adefope went to Loughborough to study English and, following her degree, applied to drama school – only to be turned down again. 'I think it did knock my confidence,' she reflects, 'but not as much as it could have. At university, I'd auditioned for a comedy sketch group and got in, so I think that was enough to keep my confidence going for 10 years.' She lets out a loud laugh. 'Just about.'

With drama school off the cards, Adefope got an office job, which she juggled with moonlighting at open-mic gigs and comedy nights. How did she cope? 'It was exhausting,' she admits. 'I'd never know when I was going to get a gig; I'd suddenly get a call asking me to perform the next night and I'd have no material.' So she'd call in sick and spend the day writing. 'Then you have your appraisal with your manager and she says, "You've called in sick 11 times in the last two months,"' Adefope deadpans. 'It wasn't sustainable.' In 2014, she reached a crossroads when she got the chance to perform at Edinburgh Fringe. 'I wouldn't have been able to do it and keep my job at the same time, so I felt like I was being pushed in the direction of comedy,' she says. Adefope resigned from her office job and performed a solo sketch in character as Gemma, a customer services adviser who tries her hand at stand-up for the first time. It marked the start of a successful career in character comedy.

'I feel safer doing this than straight stand-up, because I get to hide behind a character,' she explains. 'You're saying: "We're all in this together, laughing at the character." In stand-up, it's more like you against the audience, trying to get them on side.'

Would she ever do stand-up, as opposed to character comedy? 'I don't think so,' she says carefully. 'I find it quite stressful – the possibility of the audience not liking you. But it's definitely something that has got better with time. I'm starting to realise that when people come to my gigs, they probably don't hate me. So I'm getting slightly less scared to be myself on stage.'

> **'I find stand-up stressful – the possibility of the audience not liking you'**

It is, of course, a different matter on screen. Adefope is known for her versatility in acting roles, having played everything from an apathetic angel working as God's secretary in the US comedy *Miracle Workers*, opposite Steve Buscemi and Daniel Radcliffe, to the vibrant, self-assured lesbian Fran in *Shrill*, which began as a supporting role and grew to get nearly as much airtime as Aidy Bryant's lead Annie by its third and final series. This range is deliberate, she says, because she doesn't want to get pigeonholed. 'Since *Shrill*, for example, I've been offered similarly confident, queer, cool characters, but I don't want people to think that's all I can do. I used to think acting was about saying yes to as many parts as possible, but it's about mixing it up.'

Does it require a certain confidence to turn down roles? 'Yes, although I never really know whether I'm making the right decision,' she confesses. 'There are things I'm asked to do a self-tape for and I'll say no for whatever reason. Then a month later, they'll announce the cast and there will be really big people in it and I'll think, "Have I made a mistake?"'

It's Adefope's boyfriend of four years, whom she met in a pub through a mutual friend, who helps her keep things in perspective. 'We make each other laugh a lot, and he's not in the industry, which really helps,' she says. 'When I come home to him, I can really switch off. And if something at work has gone wrong, I can vent to him and he'll help me realise that little things don't matter.'

In 2019, as a guest on Dolly Alderton's *Love Stories* podcast, Adefope spoke about how she used to think that relationships were supposed to be messy and complicated, but meeting her boyfriend made her realise it could be gentle and easy. Almost three years down the line, I'm curious as to what she's learned since. 'I guess that it shouldn't be so easy that you're coasting,' she says. 'It should feel like you're moving forward rather than plateauing. It should be invigorating and like it's something that you want to work on each day.'

This is something that Adefope says she's increasingly aware needs to go into her friendships, too. 'It used to be so much easier with friends in my 20s, because a lot of them are comics and we'd spend all this time gigging together,' she reflects. 'But now we're going off in different directions, so you really have to put the effort in.'

Does she feel she's a good friend? 'I'm good at being there for my friends – hyping them up and making them feel good about themselves,' she says. 'But maybe what I need to work on is my need to fix things. When a friend comes to me with a problem, I want to say the exact right thing, because I always think I have the perfect remedy. I try to be the saviour. But sometimes people just need to be sad for a bit.'

She does strongly believe in the power of laughter for our wellbeing, however. 'Laughter is like a release, isn't it?' she says. 'There's something innate about it. It's almost involuntary, so it's a form of being true to yourself.' What makes Adefope laugh? 'TikTok,' she says without a moment's hesitation. 'I have a short attention span, so anything six seconds long is great for me.'

Procrastination, Adefope admits, is a recurring feature of her writing process – including when it comes to her own sitcom, which she's 'very slowly' developing at the moment. 'There's so much TV out there, I don't want to add to that pile unless it's as good as the shows I already love,' she explains, citing *Catastrophe* as her most recent favourite. 'If I'm going to make something, I might as well make it really amazing. There's no point in half-arsing it. I want to nail it. I want it to be the best version of the idea that it can possibly be.' In the meantime, Adefope is just about ready to wind down for the year. She'll be enjoying Christmas dinner (duck, not turkey) with her family, drinking Baileys and watching *Home Alone* and *The First Noelle*. As for her hopes for 2022? 'This year, everything has been so big and open, so I'm craving small dinners, intimate indoor gigs, cosy evenings, that kind of thing.' She pauses. 'Yes, just more intimacy – that's what I want in 2022.'

The Ghosts Christmas special will air on BBC One in December

PHOTOGRAPHY: RACHEL SHERLOCK

PARTY LIKE IT'S 2021

As the world returns to a semblance of the party season that once was, you'd be forgiven for needing a few pointers. Mini Smith asks for a little help from our friends...

THE FOOD

Cookery writer and author of *A Table For Friends* (Bloomsbury) Skye McAlpine suggests keeping main dishes simple, like a roasted chicken, but getting creative with sides. Try her artichoke and pecorino salad (baby artichokes in oil, dressed with lemon juice, olive oil and parsley, with shavings of pecorino) or her buttery saffron-infused fennel (sliced fennel bulbs sautéed in olive oil with onions, then cooked in white wine and saffron – see the full recipes in her book).

As for party snacks, this year, Rita's Dining co-founder Missy Flynn thinks indulgence is in. 'Devilled eggs are a fun snack you can play around with, such as the ones Gabriel [Pryce, head chef] has always done at Rita's: hot-bean devilled eggs with sesame oil and spring onion.' Otherwise, she recommends gildas, aka a salty anchovy on a stick with an olive and a chilli pepper. And if you're a cheese lover, Flynn suggests pairing it with something spicy. 'I love a chutney with a bit of kick, like our Bodega Rita's habanero chutney with whole candied peppercorns. And for charcuterie, a good bresaola with some hard cheese is always great.'

Go all-out on dessert, says Laura Jackson, co-founder of new interiors marketplace Glassette (glassette.com). 'This year feels like we're allowed to pull out all the stops, so one thing I'm having at my own Christmas party is a huge profiterole tower for a fun centrepiece,' she says. 'You can build your own – just buy loads of profiteroles from the supermarket, make an easy sugar syrup and then stack them up around a cone.'

THE DECORATION

Christmas is the time to let candles shine (literally), says Jackson. 'I'm really into sticking them in an arrangement of fruit or veg,' she says. 'For my wedding, we put tealights in artichokes, which worked really well, or you can buy very thin beeswax candles – stick one in a pear, which you can then eat with cheese at the end of the night.' For party vibes, Jackson recommends giant paper baubles. 'You can buy them in quite inexpensive sets, but having them in bright, playful colours is more interesting than your traditional white snowflakes.' Unless that's the whole idea… 'I think people will really embrace the idea of full-on fancy dress, themed parties this year,' says Paula Sutton, author of *Hill House Living* (Ebury). 'Personally, I'm hoping that someone will go the whole hog with a Narnia theme, complete with fake snow, street lanterns on the dance floor and perhaps a wardrobe-cum-drinks-cabinet.'

THE DRINKS

If wine is on the menu, think twice about the vessel, says Jackson. 'I feel like wine glasses are a bit out. I've designed some short-stem bistro-style glasses for Glassette, which are cool and multifunctional.' For cocktails, she'll be serving up a classic Paloma [a tequila-based cocktail] this year. 'Make it a bit interesting by adding some grated grapefruit peel with lime and salt on the rim.' And as for the next new trend? 'I'm forever looking at cocktail menus in America, as they're always one step ahead. Right now, alpine liqueur like Génépi is really big.' NYC's Estela restaurant pairs it with mezcal, celery and lime for a fresh take on a margarita. For more inspiration, try one of these:

Bramble Fizz

from The Ned's bar manager, George Simmons

Ingredients:

- **One whole clove**
- **20ml Bombay Bramble Gin**
- **15ml lemon juice**
- **10ml chestnut syrup**
- **Rosé Champagne, to top up**
- **Cranberry and rosemary, to garnish**

1 Shake all the ingredients (apart from the Champagne) with ice. Fine-strain into a Champagne coupe, then top with your rosé Champagne.

2 Garnish and serve.

The Last Leaf

from The Dandy Bar at The Mayfair Townhouse

Ingredients:

- **40ml spiced rum**
- **15ml lemon juice**
- **10ml orange juice**
- **25ml egg white**
- **15ml maple syrup**
- **Red sugar dust and maple wafer, to garnish**

1 Dry-shake all the ingredients without ice, then add ice and shake again.

2 Pour into your chosen glass and garnish.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLERYSTOCK, STOCKFOOD

THE TABLE

It's not all about the food when it comes to cracking your table. McAlpine puts little dishes of chocolates or sugared nuts and fruit along the table, as well as handwritten menus. And for something your guests can remember the evening by, 'leaving a little ornament on everyone's place setting is a lovely memento'.

Bored of the same old tablecloth? Just add more, says Jackson. 'This year, I want to layer up my tablecloths to create a fun texture,' she says. 'Three is probably the max – I'll be pairing a plain, bright coloured one with gingham and stripes for a really cool look.' If you're tempted, try to use each colour more than once throughout the scheme to pull it all together, suggests Rebecca Udall, founder of her eponymous homes label. 'Then layer up each setting with a placemat and charger, to avoid the table looking flat between courses – before adding plates,' she says. 'Mix votives [short, small candles] and tapered candles in holders for a balance of height across the table.'

As for crackers, buy a kit online and make your own, says Jackson. 'You can cover them in wallpaper or fabric, but I usually use acrylic paints to add simple, coloured stripes.' She suggests personalising the gifts inside – a sample-sized perfume bottle or nice lipstick – and adding a hat and some terrible jokes. 'If that all seems too much of a task, elevate store-bought crackers by adding your own velvet ribbon,' adds Udall. 'It's a great way to tie in a colour you have used elsewhere.'

THE PLAYLIST

Vick Hope, DJ, broadcaster and co-host of BBC Radio 1's drivetime show, selects her favourite tunes to get any party started:

1 GROOVE ARMADA – *SUPERSTYLIN'*

All it takes is the first bar of this banger to evoke that festival glow. Transfer that vibe to a party setting and it still goes off a treat.

2 BLACKSTREET – *NO DIGGITY*

The best old-school R&B tune ever made! We all know the words and there's that excitement that accompanies the beginning of Dr Dre's verse as we turn to our friends with a 'Woah'.

3 MURA MASA FT CHARLI XCX – *1 NIGHT*

Mura Masa is such a special DJ and producer. This track has the ability to get you moving, while also getting you all in your feels.

4 BURNA BOY – *YE*

I was brought up largely on the music of my mum's native Nigeria and I'm really happy that Afrobeat has become so popular in the UK, with Burna Boy leading the way. This song is good vibes all round.

5 MISSY ELLIOTT – *WORK IT*

Ramp things up now with the ultimate floor filler. I don't think there's ever been another artist who sounds like Missy Elliott and I don't believe there ever will be.

6 OUTKAST – *ROSES*

Melodically smoother than *Hey Ya*, with that spirit-lifting Outkast energy, *Roses* is a bona fide party anthem. It's a track that gets everyone singing at the top of their lungs.

7 LIZZO – *SOULMATE*

Watching Lizzo at Brixton Academy in 2019 was one of my favourite gigs to date. It was a celebration of self-love, pleasure and the joys of womanhood. *Soulmate* is the encapsulation of that feeling.

8 MGMT – *TIME TO PRETEND*

No matter how retro this song gets, it will always sound fresh. So pure, so clean, so big, so lively, so evocative and what a hook. *Time To Pretend* is a modern classic.

9 DIANA ROSS & THE SUPREMES – *YOU CAN'T HURRY LOVE*

Motown at its very finest, this track has a place close to my heart. My mum used to sing it to me when I was little and I even performed a quickstep to it on *Strictly*. I defy anyone not to raise a smile when this comes on.

10 DESTINY'S CHILD – *8 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS*

Is it controversial to say this is my favourite Christmas song? The silkiest vocals and sexiest arrangement, served with a slice of nostalgia. Spinning this track is the best gift of all.

Christmas-proof your mind

The most wonderful time of the year can also be the most tense. Here's how to swerve that festive frazzle...

All should be merry and bright. So why is there a tinsel-shaped knot of dread in the pit of your stomach? That's right – festive anxiety is real and we're calling it out. It appears in late November, somewhere between trying to create a Christmas that's more perfect than the John Lewis ad, cramming in some festive Facetime with your entire contacts book and dropping more than your annual gym membership on presents for everyone from your best friends to your random relatives. If you're already trying to work out how to escape Christmas entirely, you need to figure out a plan. Here's how to Christmas-proof your mind through to New Year and beyond.

Perfect month syndrome

There's nothing like the calendar changing from 30th November to 1st December to send us into panic mode as we try to plan the perfect Christmas. Unsurprisingly, the problem isn't Christmas; it's us. 'You tend to look back on your childhood Christmases through rose-tinted glasses,' says Sally Brown, a therapist who specialises in anxiety (therapythatworks.co.uk). 'So when you grow up, you go into a frenzy of organisation and spending in a bid to create that 'special time'. But you're trying to recreate something that never really existed. It was never perfect; in reality, there were tantrums, tears and disappointments.'

So how can you get over this need for perfection and learn to enjoy Christmas for what it is – a thoroughly imperfect time with pockets of pure joy? 'Stop trying to have the Christmas you think you should be having and start doing it your own way,' suggests Nicky Lidbetter, CEO of Anxiety UK. 'Just because some people like to spend the day cooking, drinking and seeing family, doesn't mean you have to.' If you want to get up at 5am, do a Parkrun, banish presents and have sashimi for dinner, that's your call. Ditch the cardboard-cutout Christmas and you might enjoy it a lot more. 'The irony is that what actually makes it a special time of year is that feeling of connection and goodwill,' adds Brown. 'And that's something you can't buy.'

Social unrest

Endless small talk can strike terror in the most sociable of butterflies. And coming up against awkward conversations, whether that's as your partner's plus-one or with your own family, is mandatory at this time of year. 'It might sound ridiculous, but try rehearsing the party in your mind in advance,' suggests Chloe Brotheridge, author of *The Anxiety Solution*. 'Part of social anxiety stems from imagining that things will go wrong – making small talk with that colleague you've never clicked with, or forgetting the name of a friend of a friend. Rehearse different scenarios, plan some conversation openers and note any topics that make you feel uncomfortable.' Yes, you might feel like a fun-sponge having to prep for a party, but research suggests that when we go into something expecting it to go well, it's more likely to be a success.

The other reason for those pre-party nerves is the sheer volume of events in your diary. 'Anxiety has an accumulative effect – it's like water dripping into a glass. If you don't empty it regularly, it'll overflow,' says Brown. 'It's essential to incorporate some breaks from socialising.' Block out at least two slots each week for dedicated R&R – ideally, make one a week night and the other a few hours at the weekend. Expect to feel FOMO if you have to miss the odd do, but a date with the sofa can feel like pressing the re-set button, putting you back on sparkling form for the next gathering. 'If you really can't say no to an invitation, take a tip from Anna Wintour and never stay at any party for more than 20 minutes,' Brown adds. 'If that sounds too drastic, make up your own rules – maybe you always leave by 10pm, or only have two drinks.'

Finally, switch off. Instagram is the enemy when you already feel the pressure that your tree is not perfect enough, diary not packed enough and turkey not organic enough. Delete social media from your home screen if it's adding to your angst.

Family values

Whether that squabble is fuelled by a game of Articulate or something stronger, consider a festive family feud as much of a tradition as blasting out Mariah Carey on repeat. 'No matter how much your life has moved on and you've changed as a person, there's a family dynamic that descends at Christmas that feels frozen in time,' says Brown. 'Returning to the family home means the odds of changing that dynamic are stacked against you because it's full of environmental cues – from the decorations to where everyone sits at the table – that trigger memories and stir up feelings. It almost acts like a time machine, transporting you emotionally backwards to childhood.'

If the same arguments are cropping up every year, it's time to start doing things differently. 'Enjoying Christmas somewhere more neutral instantly changes the dynamic,' says Brown. 'Pause and breathe before you rise to the bait and get embroiled in years-old tensions. And humour is your best defence, followed by not getting too drunk.'

Love, actually

There's nothing like a festive flick or probing questions from relatives to amplify the fact that you're single. 'The overwhelming message we're fed from Christmas hype is that it's a time of year for families, couples and groups of friends. It isn't true, but facing Christmas without a partner or your loved ones can exacerbate feelings of loneliness,' says Brown. 'If you know being among certain people is going to leave you feeling worse about yourself, don't be afraid to set a limit on your time with them in order to protect your wellbeing. And make sure you get together with good friends soon after to emotionally "detox".'

If you're not spending Christmas in the way society expects, have to work, or can't be with your loved ones, Brown suggests marking the end of the year in your own way. 'Create your own mini-ritual that's yours and yours alone. And instead of dwelling on what you're missing out on, focus your attention on the year ahead. What do you want to achieve? How do you want to 'be' in the year ahead? What would you like to be different this time next year?' Creating a plan for the future is both encouraging and empowering.

Avoid an anxious advent

Routine and structure are tonics for an anxious mind. Get up at the same time each day, have regular meals and pretend it's business as usual. If you're short of plans, make a list of all the things you want to do during your precious time off and action that list.

Spend a day saying 'no'. If you don't want to schlep across town to yet another Christmas drinks gathering, then don't do it. Take back control of your free time.

Keep up your normal exercise routine. Exercise is the closest we've got to a magic bullet for managing mood. Sticking to your routine will give you a sense of control over the chaos.

Do a complete digital detox. Log off and switch off, even if it's just for one day. Not knowing the exact shade of everyone else's turkey will do you no harm. In fact, it will do the world of good.

Ward off low mood by identifying three things you were most grateful for each day and writing them down. It sounds simple, but studies show an association between feelings of gratitude and a sense of overall wellbeing.

Take time to relax every day, even if it's just doing a 10-minute YouTube yoga session or a guided meditation on Headspace.

It's good to talk. Phone a friend or call a helpline such as Anxiety UK (03444 775 774) if you need to. Your worries might sound silly in your head, but your feelings are legitimate.

WORDS: LIZZIE POOK FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH UK.
PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

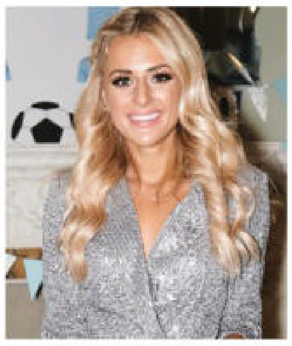
Something to believe in

From resilience in spirituality, to hope in blended faith, to purpose in humanism, nine women tell us what their beliefs bring to their lives

What does it mean to have faith? It's a question we've been asking, perhaps this year more than most. Not only because we've lived through a time of seismic change that has made many of us reflect on where we find our hope and resilience when faced with something we can't control – or who we pray to (if we do) at our most vulnerable – but also because we know that the shape and structure of religion is changing in the UK. Since 2000, Abby Day, professor of race, faith and culture at Goldsmiths, University of London, has been researching the Office for National Statistics (ONS) decennial census, and how people respond to the question that asks to self-identify with a religion or with no religion. She expects this year's census to show a further decline in Christianity (the dominant religion in the UK) and 'a continuing rise in the second largest category in the religion question: no religion'. The British Social Attitudes Survey also shows the number of non-religious people is growing.

Speaking about the decline, Day said: 'Women may not believe in God or the church, but they have other important, rich beliefs, such as honesty, care, equality, kindness and connections.' She also believes that, 'the global pandemic has shown so many of us that life is fragile and that what gets us through is not what someone may preach from a pulpit, but what people, especially women, do on the ground every day to care for their friends, families and communities.'

With this in mind, we decided to speak to women who do hold their faith close, to find out why it still has relevance in their life, and also to those who find faith in a more spiritual or meditative place, or who are reinventing their relationship with it. Some are taking the pieces of religion that work for them and discarding what doesn't. Some have found religion to be a constant source of hope, while others have pulled away from faith and then returned to it during vulnerable moments. And others have found belief in a different place altogether; in humanism, in meditation and in spirituality.



Tara Bloom, 29

'Friday night dinner has always been important to me. I treasure fond memories from my childhood, like the smell of mum's chicken soup wafting from the kitchen, to lighting the Shabbat candles, saying prayers over bread and wine, and the simplicity of finding time to sit around the table together once a week. It's a Jewish ritual, but also an opportunity for uninterrupted family time.

Our Jewish culture and faith have bound my family together, especially during the last couple of years when we've seen antisemitism rise, on top of a history of persecution. As a family, we've always been more culturally Jewish, but I do turn to my faith in times of need.

When I had a miscarriage before having my son, Ezra, I remember praying for a child. And when my father-in-law fell ill earlier this year, my husband and I sat together and recited *Shema Yisrael*, a Hebrew prayer.

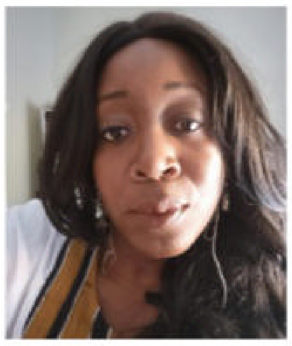
Now, as I raise Ezra, Judaism is more important to me than ever before. I want him to be proud of his Jewish heritage and faith.'

Harkamal Dhillon, 38

'When I met my husband, Ben, it was his Buddhist values that I fell in love with. His principles of giving to others and being kind interlocked with my own Sikh beliefs. As a Sikh Punjabi woman, I faced adversity from my community when we got married in 2015; because it was an interfaith marriage, we couldn't get married in a lot of Gurdwaras, and when we eventually tied the knot in a beautiful temple, some people wouldn't attend. For years afterwards, I felt hurt and rejected. I disconnected from faith and suffered with depression and anxiety.

I reconnected with my faith after having our son in 2017. Ben and I are raising him to appreciate both Sikhism and Buddhism. We'll play melodic prayers in the house and every Sunday, it's Buddha and Babaji day.

Religion can feel constricting at times; as a feminist and a logical human, I'm careful about what I teach my son, especially with pronouns. I don't want to tell my child there's an almighty 'Him' who is greater than all others. Seeing my son grow into a curious and accepting child through blended faith makes me feel my own faith is even stronger. It gives me hope.'



Nadia John, 47

'I was raised in a Christian household. My dad was a chorister and I remember the radio church service ringing through the house on Sundays. But while my family held strong faith, attending church was rarely a part of our experience.

Before moving to the UK from Sierra Leone, my dad saw churches documented to have been made from old slave ships. The juxtaposition between the slave trade and the Christian message of loving one another was so jarring that my dad separated his faith from religion and the church.

Like my dad, I have my own relationship with faith, and I don't identify with religion. I love God, but I dislike the idea of it revolving around strict rules and being unable to do certain things.

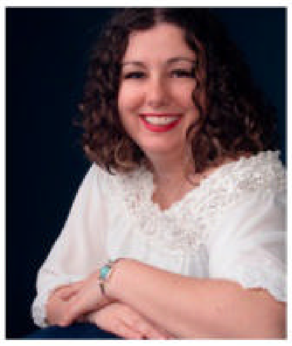
It wasn't until having my child in 2001 that I really felt my faith, after another mum in my antenatal class invited us to church. Twenty years on, I still attend the same church.

For me, church has now become a social activity. Being around people, singing at the top of my voice and serving the community really fires me up. I volunteer at a weekly youth club and on Christmas Day, I manage a soup kitchen. Yes, Christianity teaches me to be kind, but I'd do these things regardless of my faith. Helping others helps me.'

Haneen Abed, 27

'As a Muslim woman who wears a hijab and works in plastics and reconstructive surgery, I'm in the minority. There's always sexism in surgery, but God gives me the confidence to navigate through a male-dominated field, and I think it's powerful for girls to see a hijab-wearing Muslim surgeon.

I always pray before surgery. I'm trained and I have support, but operating is always scary, as I have ultimate responsibility to do the best for the patient. In those moments with God before theatre, I ask for guidance. It helps boost my self-esteem and gives me clarity. I fall back on God elsewhere in my life, too. I know He'll only give me what I can face as a challenge, so if something is unsuccessful, I know it's God testing my resilience or protecting me from the wrong path. As humans, we naturally want things to go our way, so it's frustrating when they don't, but having faith makes challenging times much easier.'

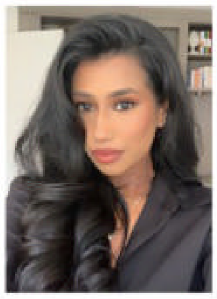


Dr Morgana Allan, 40

'Faith has changed meaning for me as I've grown into myself. Reality can be bleak when you suggest there's nothing more beyond what we can see. I was brought up to ask questions, somewhere in the space between agnosticism and atheism. Faced with many challenges, I devoted my life to finding higher meaning. That journey took me down many paths, from the Baptist Church to Buddhism and even paganism, trying to find faith. Wherever I went, I found beautiful, soulful members of faith, while others simply sought power. I felt uneasy in interacting with the latter, so just as quickly as I had begun discovering organised faiths, I left them, and instead explored for myself exactly what faith is. As a spiritual entrepreneur, to me, faith is understanding the collaborative nature of existence and intentionally being a collaborator, rather than centring on yourself. It's the understanding that you cannot extract whatever you want from the universe, regardless of the consequences for others. Faith is a form of bigger-picture thinking.'

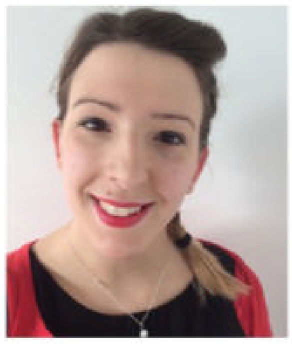
Elizabeth Coombs, 68

'For over 30 years now, I've practised Buddhism, which entered my life entirely by chance. Despite being raised as Christian, I was never interested in religion until I met Zen Buddhists and learnt how to meditate. Since then, I knew I would be doing it for the rest of my life. I've found that meditation helps me develop resilience, gentleness and kindness within myself, even as I cultivate inner strength. I used to get paralysed with fear, to the point when I couldn't function. Through the process of meditation, fears no longer have the overwhelming hold on me. Now, I can function even if I'm feeling fearful. For me, faith is not a belief in a deity or an entity, or anything purely external, but rather it means I keep on persevering, and exploring the power of what I practise. Zen Buddhism informs the very nature of how I live my life. I couldn't ever imagine not practising it.'



Nithura Sivarajah, 29

'My trust in God began when I was a child and my father became unwell. My mum and I both prayed for his health. God was like a friend to me, and my father's recovery was a blessing. Although my understanding of Hinduism has grown with me, the meaning has never changed. Hinduism has helped me make decisions and stay grounded. I moved to England from Sweden on my own at 18, to study. My new life was vibrant, but could be lonely. Having something bigger, which knew my purpose, was so comforting. One Hindu principle is about doing things with purpose. Even now, I always think about what I do for me and for others, what purpose my actions have, and I'll meditate to feel closer to God. Mindfulness is a big topic at the moment. Its principles derive from Hinduism and it's something I practise every day; my wellbeing and faith have always been so intertwined.'



Karen Wright, 30

'I'm proud to be a humanist. It's not that I lack a religious belief; I have a positively held belief that this is the one life we have and I want to use it to shape a better society. Key to this is upholding human rights, including choices over reproductive healthcare and campaigning towards an end to gender-based violence as a priority. Humanists centre their lives around living ethically and treating others as you'd wish to be treated. Even before I realised I was a humanist, I used this as a blueprint for how I lived my life.'

Yazzie Min, 33

'I've always been close to Sikhism. In 2018, I had an unexplained urge to travel to India, where my family are from, and reconnect with my roots. After persuading my sister to come with me, we stayed in a hotel on the banks of the Ganges, at the foot of the Himalayan mountains. The river was pulsating; its energy was palpable. One day, I stepped into the river and shouted: 'Ancestors, can you hear me?' I felt an overwhelming cry back from them, in a chorus of voices. Hearing that response, coupled with the gusts of wind and roaring noise from the river, gave me such joy. The river is personified by the Goddess Ganga. She gave me so much enlightenment that will stay with me for ever. Rather than one God, I believe in a bigger energy and the universe, which is too vast to fully comprehend, but I'm comfortable living without complete understanding.'

AS TOLD TO BELLA EVENNETT-WATTS AND ARYA JYOTHI. PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY, JAMES MASON, SUNDARI DESIGNS

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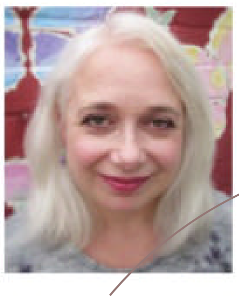
Childless, not by choice



For author Annie Kirby, not having children has often been a lonely journey. This is what she wishes more people understood about the experience

I always knew I wanted to be mum, living in a rambling house full of love and children. Sadly, motherhood didn't happen for me. I'll always mourn for the experiences I'll never have. The joy of experiencing my children's first laughs, words and steps. The pain of comforting them when they're ill or heartbroken. Pride in seeing them grow and develop and achieve wonderful things.

My journey to childlessness was complicated, from deciding not to bring children into an abusive relationship in my 20s to a long period of being single, then experiencing infertility in my 30s followed by an early menopause. When my husband presented me with tickets for a cruise to be taken the following year, for my 40th birthday, I was secretly devastated. I knew it meant he'd moved on from the hope of us having children, and I was still in a place (admittedly lying to myself) where I didn't want to plan holidays 'just in case' I might be pregnant by then.

I was in the process of organising an adoption assessment when, on my 42nd birthday, I had a devastating breakdown. Fearful of being rejected as a potential adopter and unable to face up to the possibility of another loss, I cancelled the appointment with the social worker.

I had a great job as a project manager in the public sector – chosen for its flexible working and maternity benefits, which I would now never have a use for – but it seemed as if everyone I worked with was pregnant or had children. I spent most of my work days crying in the toilets. When I confided in my doctor, she told me I was lucky, because motherhood was hard, and that I should enjoy the advantages of not having children. I withdrew into my grief, convinced no one would understand. Eventually, I was signed off sick. I barely got out of bed for months. It was awful for my husband to watch me turn from the warm, funny woman he had married into a shell of my former self, having lost all sense of purpose and self-worth.

On my first day back at work after sick leave, I discovered several of my colleagues were pregnant and somebody joked that I shouldn't sit on the 'special pregnancy chair'. I was lucky to have an understanding manager, who would find an 'urgent' errand for me to run whenever there was a maternity leave celebration. But I struggled with workplace conversations dominated by babies and children. Eventually, with my husband's support, I resigned.

Being involuntarily childless has been an incredibly lonely experience. It's hard to keep friendships going when conversations are dominated by the challenges and joys of parenthood. I found myself becoming distanced from friends, as they were too busy or only met up with other mothers for child-related outings. Sometimes, friends were unintentionally insensitive, adding to the sense of exclusion. I was once shortlisted for a writing award and was feeling happy and proud until a friend who had also been shortlisted commented on social media that it didn't compare to the achievement of recently giving birth to her first child. I began to feel that nothing I would ever achieve as a childless person would match up to my friends' experiences of motherhood.

Christmas can be an especially difficult time. As much as I love decorating my tree, putting up lights, buying gifts and cooking dinner with all the trimmings, I do feel sad knowing that I'll never experience the joy of seeing my children opening their presents or putting tinsel on the tree. I worry about future Christmases, too, when I might be alone.

After leaving my job, writing became a lifeline for me. I began to write down my feelings about childlessness. Just random scribbles at first, then paragraphs, filling up pages and pages with all the thoughts and emotions I could never confess to another person for fear of being misunderstood. But I was also creating: making something, even though I couldn't make a baby. It gave me back a sense of purpose.

I shared my thoughts about childlessness and loneliness on social media and received hundreds of messages from people who felt the same. Knowing that my words resonated with others made me feel so much less alone. Eventually, I wrote a novel about childlessness and began to run writing-for-wellbeing workshops for other childless-not-by-choice people. I now work as a part-time university researcher and my novel is going to be published next year. I write in the room that should have been my children's nursery, but now it feels like a space for me, a place where I can create.

> ‘We need to celebrate all our narratives’

What I wish more people understood is that coming to terms with being childless-not-by-choice has been as transformational an experience for me as becoming a parent is for other people. I believe it has made me kinder and more empathetic to other people's suffering, even if their suffering is different than my own. And I've learned to be compassionate towards my friends who are mothers, about the struggles they face. Because even though motherhood is everything I ever wanted, I know it isn't easy.

I've also been blessed to have made lifelong friends through online support groups for childless-not-by-choice people; incredible people living incredible lives, who helped me make sense and gain meaning from the life I've been given, even though it's not the life I planned.

Although today I'm in a much happier place and feel lucky to have a job I enjoy, good friends, gorgeous pets and a loving husband to build a new life with, childlessness is still something I think about every day. There are small, unexpected things that remind me, such as going for a vaccination and being asked if I might be pregnant, or when I was shopping for a car and the salesperson started talking about how much space a particular model would have for grandchildren.

If you're a parent or happily childfree person and you know someone else who might feel the same way that I do, the best approach is to listen with compassion and empathy, rather than pity, and avoid suggesting ‘solutions’ for your friend's childlessness. It's likely they will already have given serious thought to all the options available to them, including fertility treatment, adoption, fostering and surrogacy. Often, ‘miracle baby’ stories bring not hope but despair to those who know a miracle baby will never come, while adoption can be a complex process that should be centred on the needs of the child rather than being seen as a ‘solution’ for childlessness.

I've sometimes been criticised for referring to myself as childless instead of childfree. While I completely respect people who are childfree-by-choice, or who have become childfree-after-infertility, I personally feel bereft of children, not free from them. The ‘less’ in childless doesn't signify that I'm less of a woman, but it does represent the loss of the dream of motherhood for which I am still grieving and perhaps always will be. Having said that, I also know that not every woman feels like I do. Actually, it's frustrating that there are so few positive representations in the media of women living happy and full lives without children. I think we need to make space for that, and celebrate all our different narratives, because there are so many different ways to build a purposeful life.

As for me, I think I'll always be sad about not having children but, over the years, my grief has softened and changed shape. It sits with me now, instead of suffocating me. I find I can carry it, while living a joyful life with my husband, dogs and cats. Mine is still the house full of love that I'd dreamed of; it just doesn't come from children.

GATEWAY WOMEN is an online community for women who are childless-not-by-choice for any reason (gateway-women.com).

WORLD CHILDLESS WEEK's website includes an extensive list of support groups that are accessible all year round (worldchildlessweek.net).

The Hollow Sea (Penguin Michael Joseph) by Annie Kirby will be out in August 2022

The Rise and Rise of Reggie Yates

WORDS
ELLA DOVE

HE'S PIVOTED FROM ACTOR TO PRESENTER TO DOCUMENTARY MAKER – AND NOW REGGIE YATES IS AT IT AGAIN WITH HIS DIRECTORIAL FILM DEBUT, *PIRATES*

There is an element to Reggie Yates of being surprised by his own fame. When I ask the former child actor what the lockdowns were like for him, living alone, he looks puzzled. 'I do live on my own, but wait, how do you know that?' he laughs. 'That's weird.'

For someone who has been in the public eye since the age of eight, when he landed a role in the Channel 4 sitcom *Desmond's*, his humble nature is endearing. Now 38, he's warm and unassuming, dressed in a salmon-pink sweatshirt with a silver chain tucked beneath it and large square-framed glasses. He ponders the lockdown question: 'I know it was so hard for so many. Thankfully, I'm good in my own company, so I could enjoy the silence,' he says. 'I started cooking better and I lost weight for the right reasons. It's the first time in my entire adult life that I've stopped for that long and I came out of it knowing myself a lot better. I'm lucky; I have a comfortable home, but I didn't come from this. I've worked really hard for a long time.'

Yates, I realise, is someone who isn't necessarily comfortable being labelled as a celebrity. He's all about good, honest graft. 'I don't take this privilege lightly,' he muses. Growing up in north London, his Ghanaian parents split when he was young, meaning he didn't see much of his father, Reginald, and was largely brought up by his mum, Felicia. 'My early memories centre around family, food and music,' he recalls. 'My mother was always cooking to music.'

From an early age, he was passionate about acting. 'Drama was a way to express myself as a kid,' he explains. 'I went to a lovely community group called Anna Scher Theatre and Anna was my first mentor, who steered me towards film and television. I was lucky enough to go for auditions, and auditions led to work.'

Following his stint in *Desmond's*, Yates went on to star as Carl Fenton in BBC One's *Grange Hill* and present CBBC's Sunday morning show *Smile*, before securing the coveted job of *Top Of The Pops* co-host alongside Fearne Cotton. 'That was a beautiful time,' he says of the latter gig. 'We were teenagers and we had this group that just bonded.' The pair would later host *The Official Chart Show* on Radio 1, as well as live coverage of festivals including Glastonbury and Reading. Is he still in touch with Fearne? 'Yeah, but I haven't seen much of her in recent years,' he admits. 'Everybody's focus is family, and we exist in such different worlds with what we're doing now. But as far as I can tell, she's doing okay.'

'I HOPE MY PROUDEST MOMENT IS YET TO COME'

Despite entering the public eye young, Yates never let fame overtake his work ethic. 'There was this sign above the door at Anna Scher that always stays in my mind, which said, "There's no such thing as a star or fame",' he recalls. 'So from before I was even in double digits, I recognised the power of not getting above your station.'

By the age of 18, he'd been on TV for a decade, had a mortgage and yet he was rarely papped at parties. Did he ever feel the urge to rebel? 'I don't think I've ever needed to, because you know, I'm hardly an angel,' he grins. 'But I recognised how lucky I was because I was surrounded by people who hated work. That's probably why I never started taking drugs or drinking or smoking or any of that stuff. If I'd done that, my school would have stopped me from being allowed time off to act. I just didn't want to allow any nonsense into my life to prevent me from doing what I loved.'

After making his way up the presenting ladder and hosting prime-time shows such as *The Voice* alongside Holly Willoughby when it launched in 2012, Yates decided it was time for a change. What followed was a switch to documentary making and it quickly became clear that Yates had a knack for storytelling, with many of his projects, including BBC Two's *Reggie Yates: Searching For Grenfell's Lost Lives* and *TV's Black Renaissance: Reggie Yates In Hollywood*, achieving acclaim.

The reason for the switch? 'Entertainment just didn't feel fulfilling any more,' he confesses. 'I wasn't learning and I wanted to change that. I'm proud of being willing to do the hard thing; to pivot when everybody's telling you to stick. My accountant wasn't pleased. There's certainly not as much money in documentaries.'

His latest pivot is perhaps more exciting yet. This November will see the release of Yates's directorial feature film debut, *Pirates*, a comedy following three 18-year-old friends trying to break into the music scene as they drive through London on New Year's Eve 1999, searching for tickets for the best Millennium party. The film is enormous fun, evoking memories from the 1990s garage scene and Moschino fashion, and feels like a real celebration of Black talent. 'I've drawn from the world I know to make it feel as real as possible,' Yates says. 'It's a world we've not seen much of on the big screen: young men like I was, aware of gangs in our neighbourhood but circumventing that, wanting to have fun, to get the girl and go to the big club night.'

When it comes to diversity in the industry, Yates feels strongly that 'action is way more important than Instagram posts'. 'I was in my early 20s when I realised for the first time that I was actually doing something that was bigger than me,' he says. 'I'd meet young Black kids and they'd say to me, "I want to do the work you do because I've never seen anyone do it who looks like us." That meant a lot to me.'

He describes being a role model as 'a huge weight': 'I understand the power of my platform and because of that, I'd like to think I'm invested in the right things.' His recent work certainly seems to suggest he is. In 2020, Yates launched a youth initiative, Pass The Mic, which aims to provide a platform for, and to empower, underprivileged creatives hoping to break into TV and film. Earlier this year, he took his mission beyond the TV and film industry when he became creative director of ethical fruit supplier Blue Skies, which produces and processes its dairy-free coconut milk ice cream in his family's home country of Ghana.

'I've been going to Ghana since I was four years old,' he explains. 'I love my country of origin and to be able to be involved in a business that employs over 3,000 people and is trying to make some sort of change in the country that gave me my parents feels really important to me. My mum's really proud.'

Yates is certainly a man who squeezes the most out of every minute of his time. But when I ask about his proudest moment, he falters. 'I hope my proudest moment is yet to come, because I don't feel like I've made it,' he says. 'I've never felt that. I feel like I have a lot of work to do, if I'm honest.' A sign of his vast ambition, I wonder? 'I've never seen myself as ambitious, but I recognise that I am,' he adds. 'I think when you come from not very much, your default setting is to work hard.'

His strong work ethic, he admits, has proved a challenge when it comes to his love life. 'As much as people say they understand, not a lot of people really do get that this [job] is a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour thing,' he says. 'It requires space and that's difficult.'

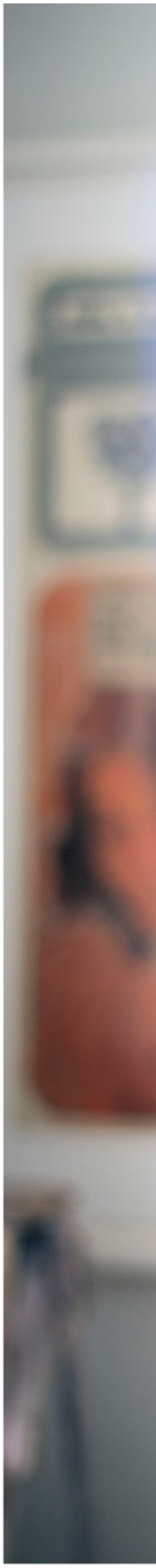
Yates was previously engaged to model Tia Ward for two years before their split in 2016 and he's remained single ever since, but he reveals that he's recently started dating again. 'Once lockdown ended, it made me recognise how much I'd love to meet someone,' he confides. 'My attitude to relationships has changed so much. There's less projection on to someone in terms of what I'd like them to be and there's certainly an understanding of the importance of the right foundations in a relationship, trying to start from friendship and build from that. Most of my friends are married, many with really magical little children. That's what I want, too. But I'm unfiltered and incredibly honest, which scares a lot of people.'

'I understand that with my straightforward nature, I'm maybe not the easiest person to be with,' he adds. 'Because it's just not the norm to have somebody who's this transparent.' He shrugs and smiles. 'But hopefully that means that the very small pool I have to choose from chooses me.'

His self-awareness, he says, comes largely from having a 'bloody good therapist'. 'My roots are pretty sound now, but there's still room to grow and room for change. We get taught from a young age to look after our teeth and our eyes, but not our brains. And that will for ever confuse me. Therapy has taught me how to manage conflict better and to be more present and balanced.'

Finding a balance between life and work is increasingly important for Yates. His version of unwinding involves watching films (he's built a cinema room in his house), 'good food and good people'. His support network is sizeable, made up of 'people who are brilliant at different things'. 'In my 20s, it was come one, come all, but spending time alone in lockdown made me value how good energy from others elevates you, so I only invest time in people I really love now,' he says.

As for Christmas, he's reserving that for family. 'No family is perfect, but you only get one,' he laughs. In recent years, his place in London has become 'the house' to spend Christmas at and this year he'll be playing host once again. 'I have the spare rooms, the dining table and the big telly. I also have two ovens, so we can have two big birds cooking at the same time,' he says. 'Christmas for me will always be about family, fun, food and laughing as much as possible.' Sounds pretty idyllic to me. 'I know,' he grins. 'I'm a bloody lucky boy.'



PHOTOGRAPHY: JOUPIN GHAMSARI

‘WHEN YOU COME FROM NOT VERY MUCH, YOUR DEFAULT SETTING IS TO WORK HARD’

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Spotlight on GOOD GRIEF GIFT CO.

THE FOUNDER OF GOOD GRIEF GIFT CO., AN E-STORE STOCKING THOUGHTFUL PRESENTS FOR THE BEREAVED, SHARES HER STORY

Alex Delaney is on a mission to revolutionise the way we talk about death. She was inspired to shift the conversation about what it means to grieve, as well as supporting the bereaved, after her husband died in January 2018.

'He was 39 when he died of a pulmonary embolism, developed from deep vein thrombosis,' explains Delaney. 'He was feeling breathless, so I called an ambulance, but he died shortly after reaching the hospital. The shock of losing somebody so suddenly was extraordinary. Family and friends rallied around me, but after six months, people started to fall away and I found that the hardest. I felt left behind. They see you getting on with things, so you seem to be functioning, but internally, you're not.'

WORDS: BELLA EVENNETT-WATTS. PHOTOGRAPHY: EMMA MARSHALL

BELIEVE IN YOU
SHE FLIES WITH HER OWN WINGS
thinking of you

Delaney says her cards have been her bestseller

Delaney became interested in exploring a platform that would help create a different culture around bereavement in the UK, not just supporting grievers later down the line, but their friends and families, too. The idea behind Good Grief Gift Co. was developed in Delaney's home in Hackney, London, where she researched the possibility of launching an e-store, solely stocked with gifts for the bereaved.

'I thought about what had helped me, such as messages from loved ones to say they were thinking of me, or when my family cooked me meals, helped tidy my home, and friends met me outside of the house – that was all wonderful,' she recalls. 'I visited hospices and asked therapists if a platform selling gifts was a good idea. Everybody said it was something they hadn't seen before.'

Delaney launched her site in January 2020. 'During the pandemic, people really struggled; both those who were bereaved and those who supported them,' she says. 'But it's also been a moment in time where we've been more willing to talk about death and bereavement. Building a nuanced business takes time, but I've had a steady flow of orders. I stock books and gifts, but the cards are the most popular – they're a simple yet thoughtful token.'

TREE OF LIFE

A memorial planting kit is a heartfelt way to commemorate a loved one

But what if you choose the wrong kind of gift for someone bereaved? 'I promise you; a slightly clumsy present will be so much more appreciated than nothing,' she explains. 'When I was grieving, one friend came to my house and said, "Here's a very expensive bottle of Champagne. I want you to open it on the day you don't feel sad any more." It was incredibly sweet, but grief isn't that simple – I'm always going to miss this person. But it didn't matter that it was a slightly clumsy thing to say because they'd tried to think about what a nice thing might be. I feel forgiving towards people because it is really hard to know the right thing to do – even I find it difficult.'

As for the future of Good Grief Gift Co., Delaney is hopeful. 'My vision is to make the platform much bigger, offering practical services as well as thoughtful gifts, such as a cleaner for three months, or a vegetable box subscription. When you're grieving, the motivation to keep your normal routine is massively reduced – I want Good Grief Gift Co. to impact people and really help.' *goodgriefgift.co.uk*

HOW I GOT HERE

Female bodyguard and founder of security services company UMBRA International Kate Bright charts her career journey

As one of very few women who hold a Close Protection Licence, Kate Bright is asked a lot of questions about her job. But, she says, far from being a disadvantage, being a woman in such a male-dominated industry is an opportunity for growth and development. 'If my head of security and I check into a hotel, we look like a couple having a night away,' she says. 'Whereas, if a group of big burly men turn up, it's much more obvious.'

Starting out as a PA, Bright never imagined she'd become a bodyguard. But, six years on from setting up UMBRA, business is thriving. Bright has protected numerous high-profile families and celebrity clients, and in 2018, did a TEDx talk entitled *Can Women Protect Men?* The answer, of course, is yes.

MY FAMILY WAS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF PROTECTION. I grew up in a big Irish-Bavarian household, full of noise and laughter, and realised early on that my siblings were my de-facto bodyguards. My older brother and sister are also my godparents, so I always had their protective wrapper around me. In turn, I was protector to my younger brother, collecting him from school. That was my earliest experience of people looking out for one another.

> 'I WANT TO BE A ROLE MODEL. IF YOU CAN'T SEE IT, YOU CAN'T BE IT'

AFTER STUDYING FRENCH AND MANAGEMENT AT ROYAL HOLLOWAY, I BECAME A PA. I started my first job the day I finished university, working in the chairman's office of Fox Kids, which was being taken over by Disney. I was one of five assistants, and I was able to interact with all the senior staff at Disney. That was my first real experience of dealing with people at the highest level of business.

I WENT ON TO WORK FOR A NUMBER OF HIGH-PROFILE FAMILIES. Over the next 15 years, I progressed from PA to EA (executive assistant) roles and eventually became chief of staff. I managed families' affairs, becoming protector of their life and lifestyles.

INCREASINGLY, THE WORD 'SECURITY' KEPT POPPING UP. I found myself working more and more closely with my clients' security personnel, men and women who had worked in everything from Special Forces to government agencies globally. A lot of them had come from military law enforcement backgrounds, and I was really inspired by their work ethic and discipline.

IN 2013, I DECIDED TO TRAIN FOR MY SECURITY INDUSTRY AUTHORITY CLOSE PROTECTION LICENCE. The two-week course surprised me. Although there was a physical element, such as martial arts, it was a lot more classroom-based than I'd imagined, all about the importance of planning and preparation, and learning crucial first aid skills. The methodology of close protection is that if you're in a scenario where you're fighting someone, who's looking after the client? Therefore, everything that you learn is about how to not get into that situation, how to avoid and diffuse.

AS A WOMAN FROM A NON-MILITARY BACKGROUND, I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD BECOME OPERATIONAL. However, once people found out about my training, the phone began to ring. Security personnel wanted a woman on their team, because my physical presence could help them be more discreet. I realised that there was a demand for women like me – that a diverse team with a diverse skill set is the best way to combat the risks and threats of modern life.

IN 2015, I FOUNDED MY COMPANY, UMBRA. The idea is to provide an all-round security experience for clients, from people management and procurement to project management and advice. UMBRA finds trustworthy people, gives good advice and helps clients project manage all areas of their lives. The business combines my PA skills with close protection knowledge, and it is my proudest creation to date.

ONLY 5% OF PEOPLE WHO HOLD A CLOSE PROTECTION LICENCE ARE WOMEN. In this sort of minority, you can either succumb fully to imposter syndrome, or you can embrace your difference and see it as an opportunity. Any judgement I have experienced, I've always aimed to turn into something I can use to counter it.

I'M HUGELY PASSIONATE ABOUT BRINGING YOUNG WOMEN INTO MY INDUSTRY. There is a lot of versatility and flexibility, and we need more talent to come through. I want girls like my young nieces to see me as a role model, and for security to be a normal career path for them to aspire to. If you can't see it, you can't be it.

Kate's free security toolkit can be found at umbrainternational.com/secure-lifestyle-toolkit

WORDS: ELLA DOVE. UMBRAINTERNATIONAL.COM

MERRY CHRISTMAS... AND A HAPPY CAREER

Whether you're buying for friends, colleagues or yourself, Alice Olins shares the gift ideas that make work easier

As a coach and the founder of a women's career-development company, I'm aware that looking after yourself pays dividends much longer than another smock blouse – which is why, if you look at my recent credit-card statements, you'll see that I no longer spend my extra pennies on ASOS impulse buys. Instead, I invest in products and tech that make my life more enjoyable (and, crucially, easier). And so, this Christmas, I'm sharing some gift ideas – for yourself and others – that could get you a better job, increase your happiness and make your desk more stylish at the same time.

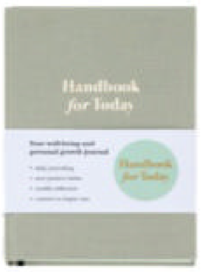
I'm going to start with a plug for my own business. Quite a few years ago, I was standing at a very lonely, overwhelming professional crossroads. I knew I wanted to make a change, but switching jobs still felt taboo (let me qualify, this was 2010). We've come a long way from those days, thank goodness, and yet I still coach and support women daily who are also at tricky pivot points. They don't know which way to turn, let alone how to rebuild their confidence or find their new purpose.

- ***Enter the Step Up Club:*** our community is a place to professionally breathe, to learn, to build your network, to listen, to speak, to rediscover your way. We have live events almost every week (tone: informal, fun, there's often wine involved), we co-work together and share a chatty Slack channel. We are a support net and a source of inspiration. Why not gift someone you love the chance to rebuild and feel great about themselves again? Step Up membership costs £34.99 a month, but we have a special Christmas *Red* 50% discount for the first two months (see code at the bottom of this page) – at that price, you can become a member, too.
- ***As a planner, I first came across* Handbook For Today** last autumn, when I was scrabbling around for a book that could simultaneously house my to-do list, my thoughts and perhaps offer a source of daily inspiration, too. This beautifully bound journal does all three and I'm proud to say that using it gives me a sense of control and sparks tiny moments of joy, too.
- ***Also last year, I came across Timeular***, a nifty piece of tech that sits on your desk (it looks like an oversized dice) and tells you what to do and how long you've been doing it for. Let me explain: you customise the dice with your regular tasks, one on each side, and then you flip to the side that you're working on to track your time or set yourself a productivity-inducing time block. Honestly, this little gadget has a big impact.
- ***Lastly, 'a set of cups'*** is an unfair way to describe Frank & Green's travel set, because they're design pieces, too. Cool vestibules to carry your coffee in – what's not to love? The Desk Buddy set includes two ceramic cups: one for on-the-go consumption and the other to sit next to your laptop. By investing in these, you'll save the planet from more single-use plastic abuse and they hugely improve coffee enjoyment, too – no soggy edges with Frank & Green.

So, there you have it, my good-vibes Christmas gift guide that won't break the bank but will create warm fuzzies in all sorts of areas of your life. Enjoy!

STOCKING FILLERS

Gift ideas to inspire you in 2022



JOURNAL, £21.99, Handbook For Today

TRACKING DICE, £89, Timeular

DESK BUDDY SET, £52.95, Frank & Green

Follow Alice's community on Instagram @thestepupclub

JOIN THE STEP UP MEMBERSHIP CLUB (and get 50% off)

Want to build your confidence, start earning what you deserve and stop feeling sick every time you need to self-promote? The Step Up Club gives working women the skills they need to shine at work. Join the Club and community and receive monthly knowledge bundles, be part of group coaching calls with Alice and have access to her network of expert coaches. To sign up, visit stepupclub.co/membersclub (membership is £34.99 a month; Red readers receive 50% off the first two months with code REDDEC21. Offer ends 31st December 2021).

PHOTOGRAPHY: ZUTE LIGHTFOOT

Sent with love...

Want to avoid long queues at the post office, missed delivery cards and pricey postage? Here's how to make it easier to send and receive parcels this Christmas

The cheapest way to send parcels

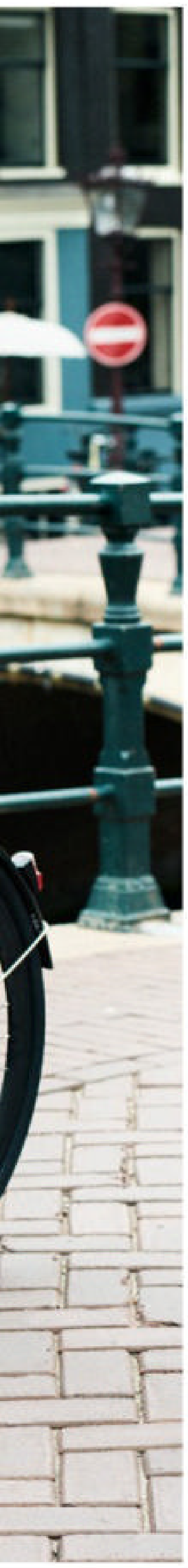
You might be surprised to hear that using Royal Mail to send a parcel isn't always the cheapest way – instead, consider couriers. If you're looking to keep the cost of Christmas down this year, compare courier services at parcelcompare.com. Just pop in your postcode and the package weight and size to find the best price for your shipment. For example, Yodel will deliver a small parcel from just £2.79, while DPD offers next-day delivery for £4.79 for a small parcel.

If you like the convenience of Royal Mail and you're sending a number of items, use its Click & Drop service at send.royalmail.com. Just enter the weight of your parcels online, pay, print the postage label and drop off your parcel at a post office or your nearest parcel postbox. Don't have a printer? You can request a QR code to be emailed to you, which you can then take to a Royal Mail delivery office so they can scan it and print out a label. To send a parcel straight from your doorstep, use Parcel Collect (72p extra per parcel; send.royalmail.com/collect/youritems). A mail carrier will collect it on their daily round from your door or a safe place of your choosing.

Four other convenient places to pick up a parcel

Avoid the dreaded 'We called while you were out' card by using Click & Collect. When shopping online, instead of choosing 'delivery' at the checkout, pick 'collection' and enter your postcode. There are thousands of places to choose from, so you shouldn't have to go far, such as…

- The supermarket. If your parcel is being sent by Yodel, Hermes or DPD, it's likely that you'll be able to pick it up from your nearest supermarket.
- Your local corner shop. There are around 47,000 convenience stores in the UK, so chances are there's one near you that acts as a collection point for parcels. When ordering your parcel, check if your local shop offers this service by putting your postcode into the delivery company's website.
- WHSmith. Over 200 branches have Post Offices in-store where you can collect your online orders.
- Amazon Lockers. These are in thousands of locations across the UK, including petrol stations, libraries and railway stations. During checkout, select the Locker as



your delivery address and you'll be emailed a six-digit code that allows you to open the locker and collect your parcel. There's no charge for Amazon Prime members; for non-members, standard shipping is free and same-day is £5.99 (only available at selected lockers).

Protect your parcels from theft

Over 5m people had their parcels stolen last year, according to Citizens Advice. To help ensure your parcels don't go astray…

- Order your parcel to go to a collection point (see previous), rather than risk it being left on your doorstep.
- Invest in a parcel safe (such as an iParcelBox, from £219.99, iparcelbox.com) to house your package securely until you get home.
- A camera or video doorbell will help you keep an eye on anyone approaching your front door (and can help the police identify potential thieves if you do have a theft). The Ring Video Doorbell 3 (£159, ring.com) streams and records HD video and is easy to install.

Three ways to avoid delivery fees

PLACE ONE LARGE ORDER

Most retailers have a minimum spend required to get free delivery. If you're tactical, you can buy presents for multiple people at the same store to reach the minimum spend.

MAKE THE MOST OF FREE TRIALS

Some companies, such as Amazon Prime, give free delivery for a monthly or annual fee. If it's a retailer you use regularly, it might be worth signing up. Even better: try a free trial over Christmas, then cancel in the new year. Set a reminder on your phone so you don't forget!

FIND A CODE

Search websites such as MyVoucherCodes and Wowcher for discounts or free shipping. MoneySavingExpert also has a great section on deals and vouchers. To make things even easier, browser plug-ins such as DealFinder by VoucherCodes will search for coupon codes automatically and let you know if you could be getting a better deal.

How to avoid scams

Delivery scams are on the rise, with three in five of us receiving a scam text claiming to be from a delivery company in the last year. Scammers impersonate delivery companies such as Amazon, DPD or Royal Mail by sending a text (it's known as 'smishing') that will usually tell you that you need to pay a fee to release your parcel. If you're unsure, always look up the company's real contact information and compare this with the contact you have received a message from. Don't click on links in emails or texts and only make a payment through a company's app or its official website.

Put your stamp on it

The post office isn't the only place where you can buy stamps. You can also add stamps to your online supermarket shop or find them at many stationery stores, including WHSmith, Paperchase and Ryman.

Does Brexit mean it costs more to post abroad?

Since the UK left the EU last year, the rules around sending and receiving parcels abroad have changed. If your friend or family member lives outside of the UK, you'll need to fill out and attach a customs declaration form to your parcel (if you're sending an item from Northern Ireland to the EU, this doesn't apply). These are available at your local post office or at postoffice.co.uk/mail/customs-forms. Letters and postcards are exempt. The person outside the UK who is receiving the package may have to pay VAT or customs – these charges vary by country and depend on the value of the item.

For goods over £135 and gifts over £39 coming to you from outside the UK, you may have to pay VAT and duties. Again, these depend on the value of the item. You'll be sent a bill stating exactly the fees – if the bill is not paid within three weeks, the item will be returned to the sender.

Last post dates

First class: 21st December
Second class: 18th December
For Europe and the rest of the world, visit royalmail.com for details.

FINANCIALLY *Fabulous*
For money-saving tips, news and brilliant advice, sign up to our fortnightly newsletter at **redonline.co.uk/ffnewsletter**

WORDS: JOANNE FINNEY, MOLLY GREEVES. PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL BELLAART

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STANDARDS,
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Filippo Berio
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EXTRA VIRGIN
OLIVE OIL
For salad dressing and flavouring
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1 LITRE

At Filippo Berio, we source the finest olive oils from across the Mediterranean.

Working with the same growers over decades ensures excellence, but only when an oil is perfect is it allowed to bear Filippo Berio's signature.

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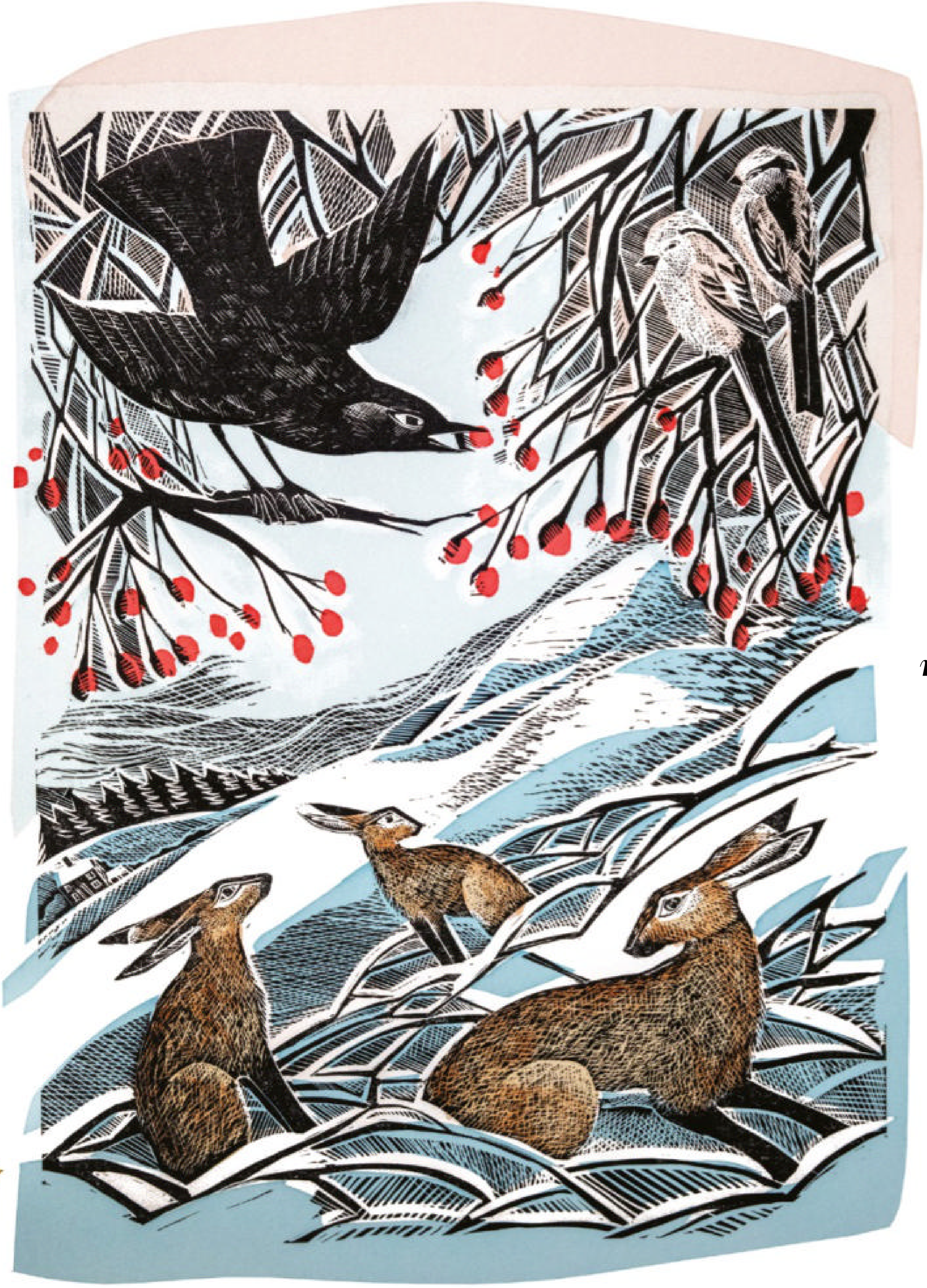
Reads

EDITED BY

ELLA DOVE



Awe

noun:
a feeling of
reverential
respect mixed
with wonder

There is a serenity that comes with watching the unfolding of the seasons. As darker nights draw in and the crispness of winter descends, this beautiful book from much-loved printmaker Angela Harding – whose work you may recognise from *The Sunday Times* bestseller *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn – captures the changing beauty of nature perfectly. With artwork inspired by the view from her Rutland studio, it's the perfect present to bring joy all year long.

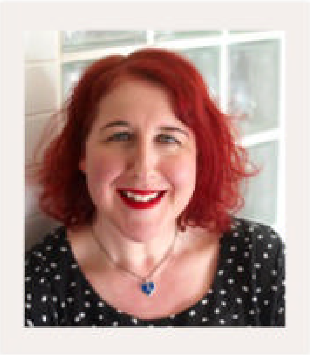
A Year Unfolding (Sphere) by Angela Harding is out 4th November

Are you a
huge
font-er?

If you're fed up with being a huge-font-er or a read-the-paper-at-arms-length-er or a zoom-in-er, it might be time for an eye test.

Book yours at specsavers.co.uk

Specsavers



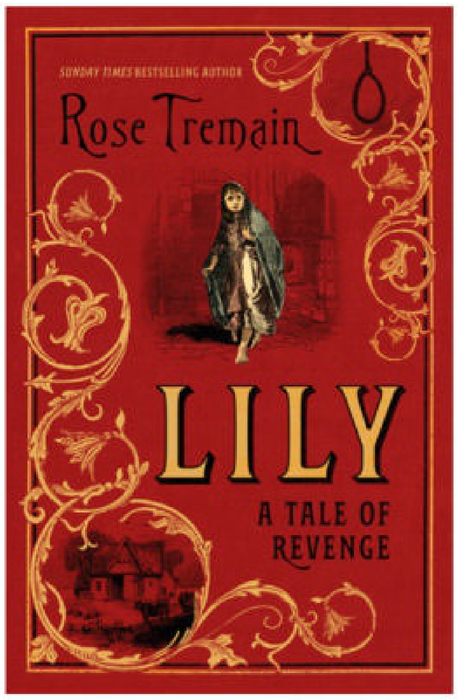
BEST BOOKS OUT THIS MONTH

LITERARY EDITOR SARRA MANNING PICKS HER FAVOURITE NOVEMBER READS

Lily: A Tale Of Revenge
by Rose Tremain

(Chatto & Windus, £18.99, out 11th November)

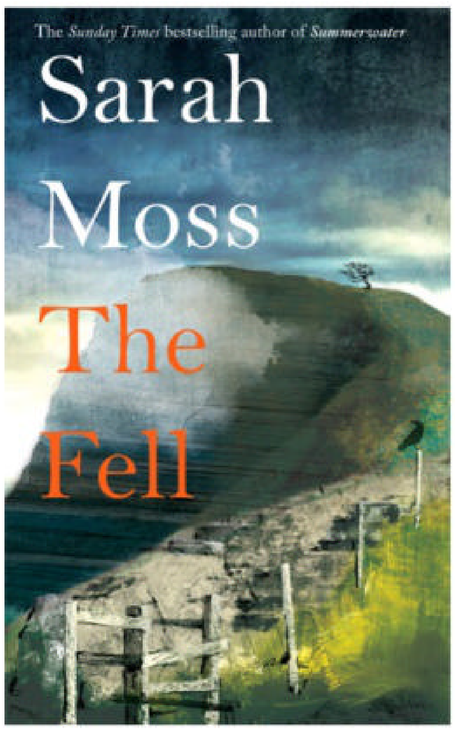
A novel that instantly transports you to Dickensian London, where our eponymous foundling, having spent her first years fostered out to a kind farming family, is sent back to the Foundling Hospital and a cruel existence. It's not until Lily gets a job and is reunited with the policeman who found her as a baby that her life can truly begin, but Lily is harbouring a deep, dark secret. A wonderfully evocative story with a heroine to root for.

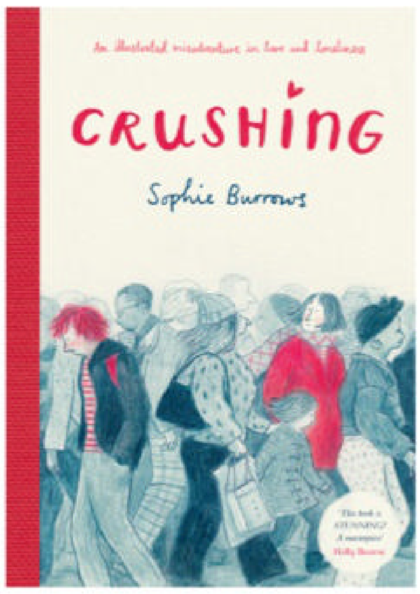


The Fell
by Sarah Moss

(Picador, £14.99, out 11th November)

A one-sitting read that's both thriller and meditation on how Covid has changed our world. In the Peak District, Kate is meant to be in quarantine but slips out for a walk and ends up falling, which necessitates a mountain rescue. Told from the point of view of Kate, her teenage son, Matt, and their elderly neighbour, Alice, this is an ambitious, immersive novel, which is also very readable. Even if you don't feel ready to read about the pandemic just yet, *The Fell* will change your mind.





Crushing
by Sophie Burrows

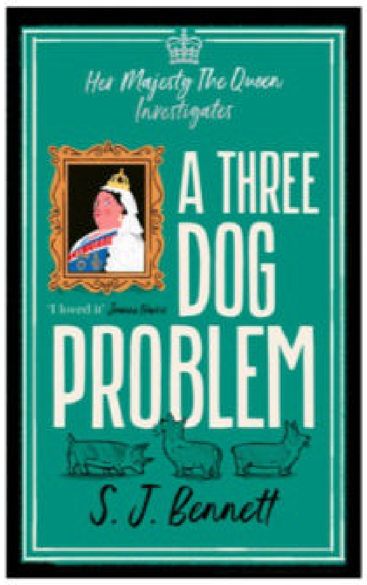
(David Fickling Books, £16.99, out 4th November)

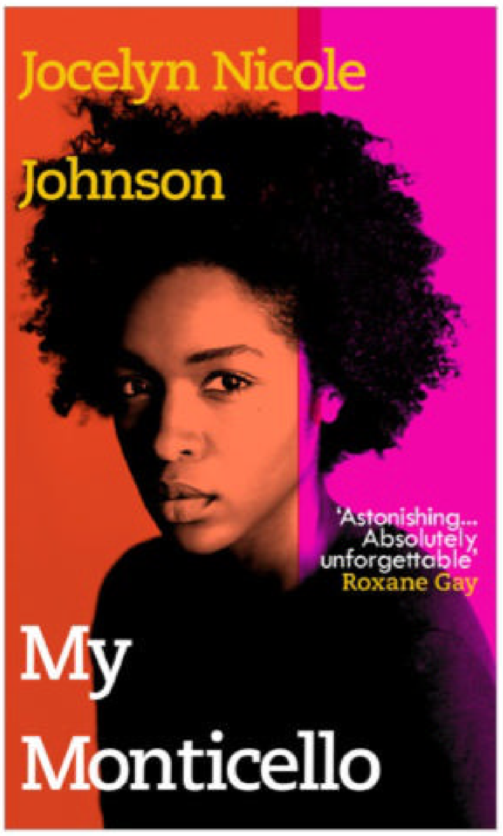
A gorgeous graphic novel that doesn't need words to convey the loneliness of its two protagonists, who are looking for a conversation, a connection, even love, in a loud, uncaring city. Exquisitely drawn, full of quirky little details familiar to any urban dweller and hopeful rather than hopeless, *Crushing* is a new kind of love story.

A Three Dog Problem
by SJ Bennett

(Zaffre, £12.99, out 11th November)

Little does Her Majesty know when she enquires about a missing painting of the royal yacht that it will uncover forged artworks, a racketeering scam and even murder. With the help of her trusty sidekick and assistant private secretary, Rozie, the Queen is determined to swap her crown for a crime scene and expose the villains in this charming and clever whodunnit.

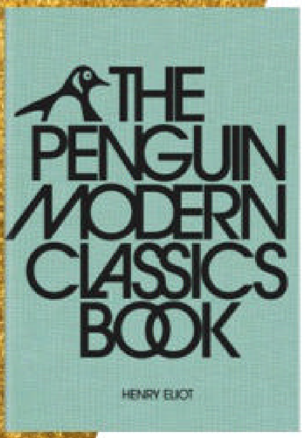
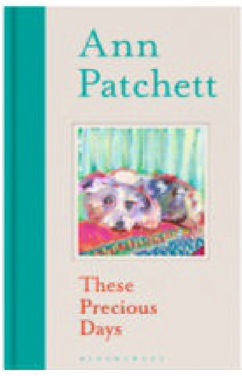
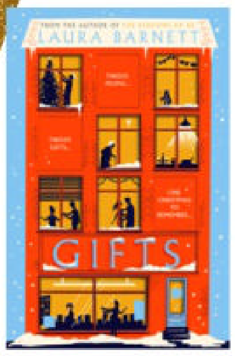
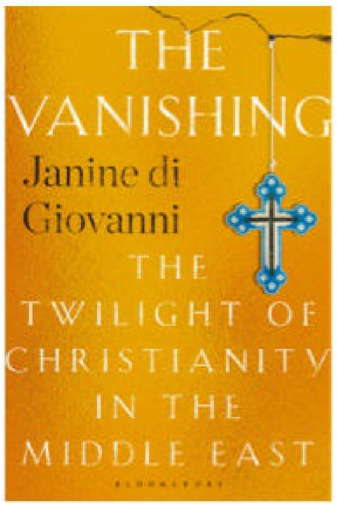
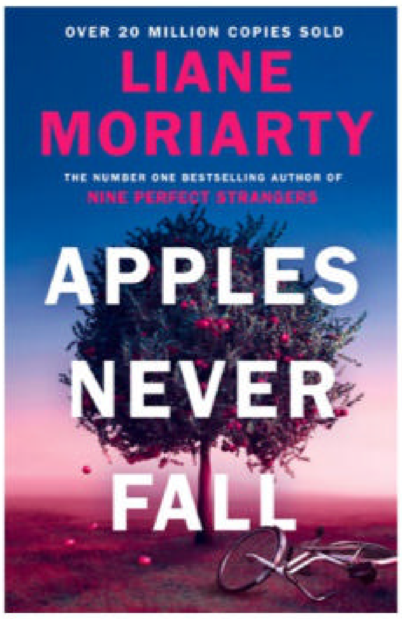
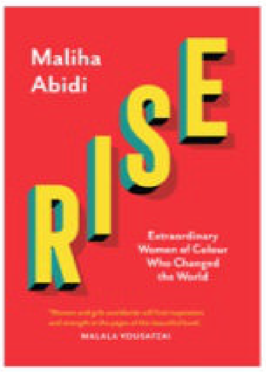
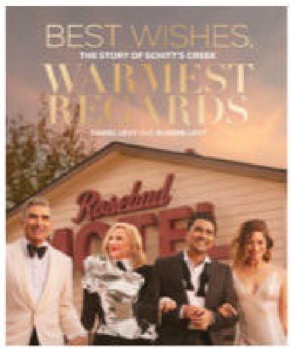
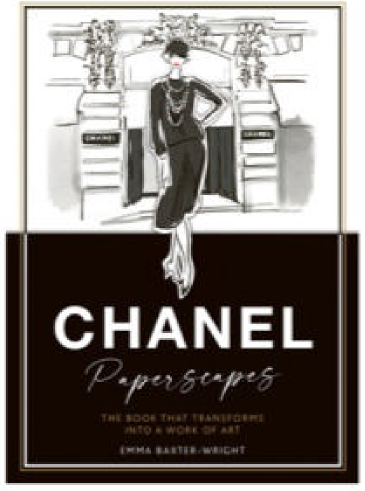




My Monticello
by Jocelyn Nicole Johnson

(Vintage, £12.99, out 4th November)

Debut author Johnson imagines a dystopian but very recognisable America, in which residents of a Charlottesville community have to flee after a firebombing by white supremacists. They take refuge in Thomas Jefferson's plantation house, Monticello – a problematic haven for the novel's narrator, Da'Naisha Love, who is a Black descendant of Jefferson and his slave Sally Hemings. *My Monticello* is a powerful, thought-provoking novel.

The book lover's gift guide

Struggling for present ideas or writing your own list for Santa? Here are our top picks for enthusiastic readers this Christmas...

The Penguin Modern Classics Book

by Henry Eliot

Ideal for any bookworm, this gorgeous book is a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the iconic Penguin Modern Classics series, showcasing every title the imprint has ever published – that's more than 1,800 books by 600 authors. You'll never be short of reading inspiration again.

Particular Books, £30, out 18th November

Gifts

by Laura Barnett

Keen for a comforting Christmas tale? Look no further than this heartwarming read, which tells the stories of 12 people, 12 gifts and one Christmas to remember. Full of warmth, poignancy and a huge dose of Christmas spirit.

W&N, £12.99, out 11th November

These Precious Days

by Ann Patchett

This rich and vibrant collection of essays and memoir from the Women's Prize-winning author of *Bel Canto* and *The Dutch House* ponders the twists and turns of life, combining Patchett's own personal experiences with universal truths that will challenge our perspectives and encourage us to view our own worlds anew.

Bloomsbury, £16.99, out 23rd November

The Vanishing: The Twilight Of Christianity In The Middle East

by Janine di Giovanni

Combining reporting and beautiful personal narrative, author and war correspondent Janine di Giovanni explores the plight and potential disappearance of Christian communities across Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine.

Bloomsbury, £20, out 9th December

Apples Never Fall

by Liane Moriarty

From the bestselling author of *Big Little Lies* and *Nine Perfect Strangers* comes this gripping thriller. The Delaney family seem to have everything, but when Joy Delaney vanishes out of the blue, questions arise. This will keep you guessing until the end.

Michael Joseph, £20, out now

Rise: Extraordinary Women Of Colour Who Changed The World

by Maliha Abidi

Endorsed by Malala Yousafzai, this inspirational and celebratory read from artist and author Maliha Abidi features inspirational women such as Michaela Coel, Jameela Jamil and Simone Biles.

Saqi Books, £20, out 26th October

Best Wishes, Warmest Regards: The Story Of Schitt's Creek

by Eugene and Daniel Levy

Lockdown saw this nine-time Emmy Award-winning series reach new heights, with many of us glued to the Canadian hit. Now, this official tie-in book delves deeper into the cult characters of the Rose family, featuring behind-the-scenes moments, full character profiles and illustrated catalogues of everything from David's knits to Moira's wigs.

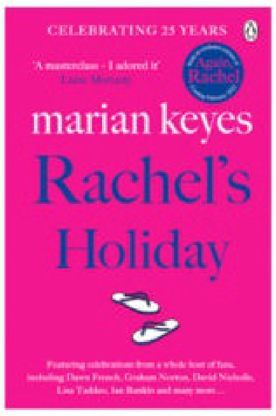
Trapeze, £25, out 26th October

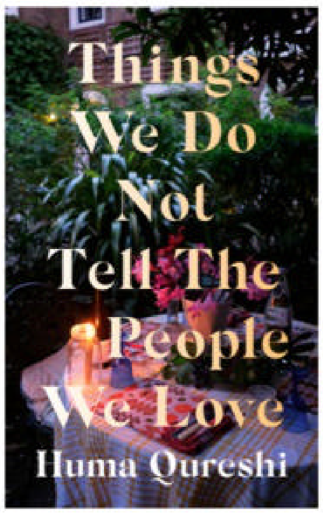
Paperscapes: Chanel

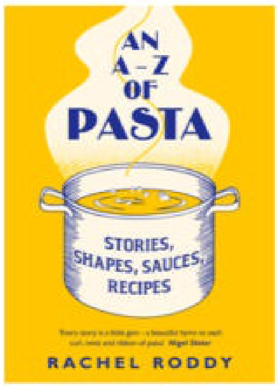
by Emma Baxter-Wright, illustrated by Francesca Waddell

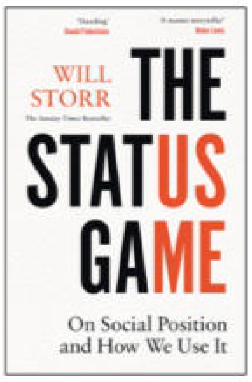
Officially sanctioned by Chanel, this chic fashion book transforms into a work of art, with 50 beautiful pop-out illustrations that can be pressed out of the page and displayed. The perfect collectors' book for any fashion lover.

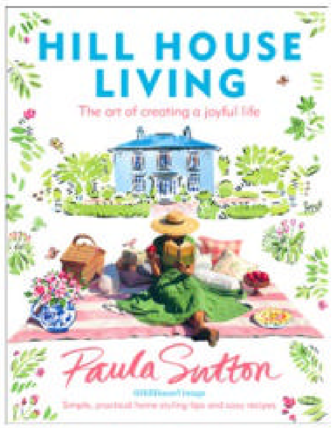
Welbeck, £14.99, out now

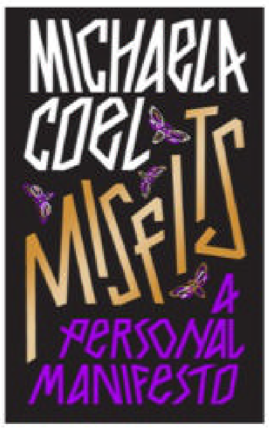


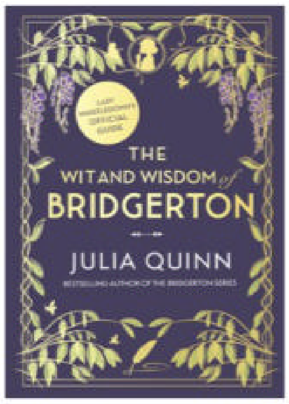












Rachel's Holiday
by Marian Keyes

Ahead of the sequel, *Again, Rachel*, which will be published in February 2022, comes this gorgeous 25th-anniversary edition of the hilarious and heartbreaking story about a young woman who is 'incarcerated' at a rehab centre after living life a little too well in New York. Marian Keyes at her best.

Penguin Michael Joseph, £8.99, out now

Hill House Living
by Paula Sutton

If there's one person who knows how to create a stylish and happy home, it's lifestyle guru Paula Sutton, known to most as @hillhousevintage on Instagram. Inspired by her love of all things vintage, this beautifully illustrated book offers thrifty tips and tricks for home styling, cosy recipes and an inspiring call to slow down and find joy in each day.

Ebury Press, £22, out now

Things We Do Not Tell The People We Love
by Huma Qureshi

This beautiful short-story collection examines the multifaceted emotions contained within our most intimate relationships, from mothers and daughters to the dissonance between lovers. At once heartbreaking and hopeful.

Sceptre, £16.99, out 11th November.

An A-Z Of Pasta
by Rachel Roddy

A must for any pasta lover, *The Guardian* columnist Rachel Roddy reveals everything she's learned about Italy's favourite food, through short essays and more than 120 pasta and sauce recipes.

Fig Tree, £25, out now

Misfits: A Personal Manifesto
by Michaela Coel

From the creator of *I May Destroy You* comes this impassioned memoir about the power of not fitting in. From her London upbringing to the dizzying world of fame, Coel charts how she learned to embrace her differences – and encourages us all to do the same.

Ebury Press, £9.99, out now

The Status Game
by Will Storr

From the author of *The Science Of Storytelling*, this bold and thought-provoking read investigates the hidden structure behind human behaviour, arguing that rather than sex, power or money, it's our craving for status that ultimately defines who we are.

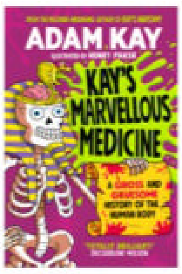
HarperCollins, £20, out now

The Wit And Wisdom Of Bridgerton
by Julia Quinn

The quest for love and happiness in high-society London and that gorgeous duke – no wonder we all fell for Netflix's *Bridgerton*. Featuring new gossip, classic quotes and plenty of observation from Lady Whistledown herself, fans will love this book by the author of the original novels.

Piatkus, £14.99, out 11th November

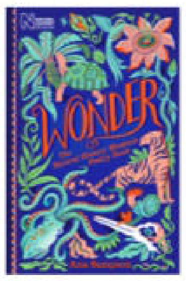
TOP READS FOR BUDDING BOOKWORMS



Kay's Marvellous Medicine

by Adam Kay

A hilarious guide to 'the gross and gruesome' history of the human body by the bestselling author of *This Is Going To Hurt*. *Puffin, £14.99, out now*



Wonder

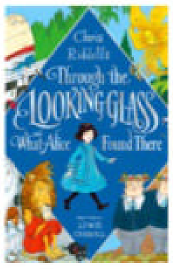
by Ana Sampson, illustrated by Melissa Castrillón

Aimed at young poetry lovers, this gorgeously illustrated anthology created in partnership with the Natural History Museum covers everything from oceans and rivers to fossils, wildlife and space exploration. *Macmillan Children's Books, £14.99, out now*

Superheroes: Inspiring Stories Of Secret Strength

by Sophia Thakur

Curated by Stormzy and his #Merky Books team, this comic-style read tells the stories of over 50 modern-day heroes from underrepresented communities across art, activism, sport, entertainment, science and more – all selected to inspire, encourage and empower children. *Merky Books, £16.99, out now*



Through The Looking Glass And What Alice Found There

by Lewis Carroll

This new edition of Lewis Carroll's classic tale, illustrated by former Children's Laureate Chris Riddell OBE, brings the timeless characters to life for a new generation. *Macmillan Children's Books, £25, out now*

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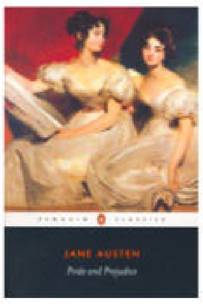
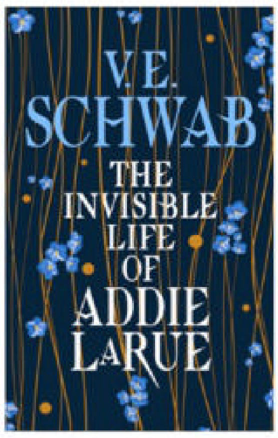
My life in books

JODI PICOULT

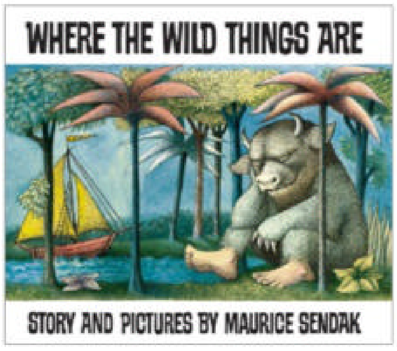
With her new novel *Wish You Were Here* out this month, the international bestselling author shares the books that have shaped her...


JANE AUSTEN
Pride and Prejudice

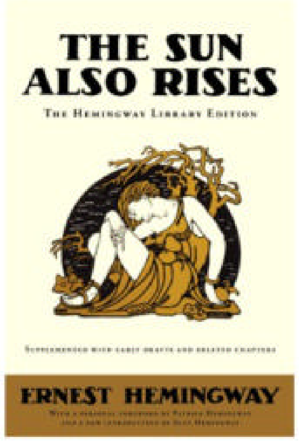
THE CHARACTER I LOVE THE MOST IS... Elizabeth Bennet. She's smart, opinionated and woefully out of fashion for her time – and still manages to find the guy who loves her for those attributes, rather than in spite of them.


V.E. SCHWAB
THE INVISIBLE LIFE OF ADDIE LARUE

MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITE BOOK IS... Hard to narrow down – I have too many. But a recent favourite is *The Invisible Life Of Addie LaRue* by VE Schwab, about a woman who makes a devil's bargain to live for ever, with the caveat that she will be remembered by no one. It's really about the way we leave the stories of ourselves behind in the world, even when the universe seems bent on erasing us.

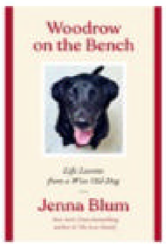

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

MY FAVOURITE BOOK AS A CHILD WAS... *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. I remember my mum reading it to me before I could read myself. There was a thrill to the thought that one's bedroom could dissolve into a whole different world, one filled with monsters, of which you might be king.

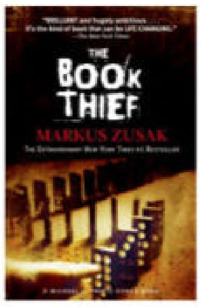

THE SUN ALSO RISES
The Hemingway Library Edition
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

MY FAVOURITE LINE FROM A BOOK IS... From Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, when Lady Brett Ashley says at the end, 'Isn't it pretty to think so?' The heartbreak and the loss of what an alternative life could have been is haunting.

THE CHARACTER I MOST RELATE TO IS... Not a character, but a real person: Emilia Bassano. She's best known as the first woman to be considered a poet, publishing a book of psalms in 1611 that had a feminist bent. Italian and Jewish by birth, she became the mistress of Elizabeth I's Lord Chamberlain – for whom a little-known guy named Shakespeare wrote plays. Not only is she thought to be the 'Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's sonnets, she still doesn't get the credit that she deserves.


Woodrow on the Bench
Jenna Blum

THE LAST BOOK THAT MADE ME CRY IS... *Woodrow On The Bench* by Jenna Blum, about the end of her old dog's life. And I mean *ugly* cry – the kind only chocolate can heal.


THE BOOK THIEF
MARKUS ZUSAK

THE ONE BOOK I THINK EVERYONE SHOULD READ IS... *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. It's about the resilience of humans and how one little life can make a difference to thousands of others.

Alice Hoffman
Turtle Moon

THE BOOK THAT HAS GOT ME THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME... I read Alice Hoffman's *Turtle Moon* when I was just out of college and navigating how to move from studying fiction to reading it for pleasure. I credit Alice with making me fall in love with words again.

Jodi Picoult
wish you were here

Wish You Were Here (Hodder & Stoughton) by Jodi Picoult is out 25th November

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BOXES OF JOY

The Sustainable Book Club, founded by actress and writer Charlie Ryall in 2020, creates hand-crafted gift boxes for book lovers without harming the planet. Each box contains a mystery vintage or second-hand book, something to sip, something to nibble and some pretty postcards or knick-knacks, all ethically sourced. There's something for everyone, from The Foodie Box, which features a recipe book, to The Theatre Box, which provides two mystery plays. Prices start at £18 and 10% of profits will be donated to Cruse Bereavement Care. *sustainablebookclub.co.uk*

YOUR CULTURE FIX

FROM THE BIG SCREEN TO THE BIG TOP, PLUS EDDIE REDMAYNE IN THE WEST END, ARYA JYOTHI ROUNDS UP A JAM-PACKED MONTH OF CULTURE

THEATRE

CABARET

Immerse yourself in the astounding talent of Eddie Redmayne (best known for his Oscar-nominated performance in *The Danish Girl* and the *Fantastic Beasts* movies) and BAFTA nominee and British Independent Film Award winner Jessie Buckley in the iconic musical *Cabaret*. Set in 1930s Berlin, this West End musical features the relationship between American writer Cliff Bradshaw and English cabaret performer Sally Bowles (played by Buckley) and explores the story of the infamous Kit Kat Club during the time of Nazism. We anticipate this one will be very big.

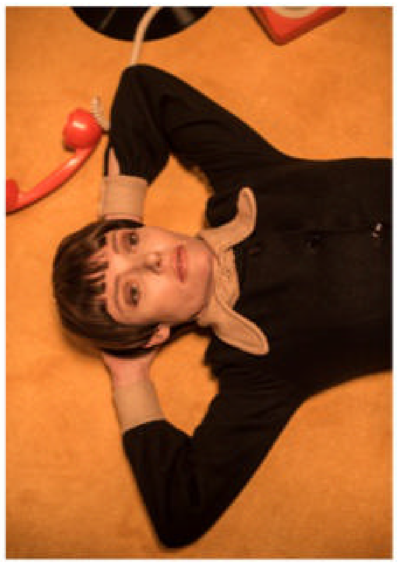
From 15th November at the Playhouse Theatre, London. Book tickets at kitkat.club

BALLET

MERLIN

Classic characters from the Arthurian legend are brought to life in this new full-length ballet, created by Olivier Award winner Drew McOnie (whose work includes the acclaimed *Jesus Christ Superstar*). *Merlin* marries the epic adventure of the young warlock in his quest to unite a warring kingdom with the beauty and grace of the discipline of ballet. Heartache, hope and spellbinding magic all feature in this unmissable show.

Touring the UK until 4th December. Book tickets at northernballet.com

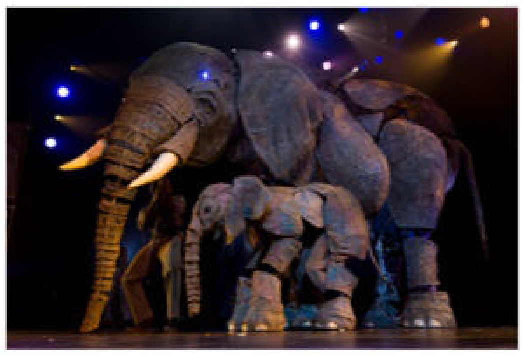


FILM

QUANT

All about fashion? This one might be for you. In her directorial debut, actor and fashion designer Sadie Frost presents *Quant*, a documentary celebrating the life of iconic fashion designer Mary Quant. Mixing archive footage with dramatised scenes (with Quant played by Camilla Rutherford, who shot to fame in *Gosford Park*) and interviews with industry gurus and Quant's own family, Frost explores the professional, personal and creative life of the so-called 'queen of the miniskirt'.

In cinemas 29th October



CIRCUS

CIRCUS 1903

International smash hit performance *Circus 1903* is back bigger than ever this Christmas, showcasing the golden age of circus for all the family. With world-class performers, including knife throwers, contortionists, acrobats and the iconic elephant pair Peanut and Queenie (brought to you by the award-winning puppetry team behind *War Horse*), *Circus 1903* promises to captivate and astonish audiences this December.

From 16th December until 2nd January 2022 at the Royal Festival Hall, London

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOEL PALMER, CHRIS LOPEZ/QUANT BY GOLDFINCH ENTERTAINMENT, BEN BLACKALL, NINA SUBIN, GETTY, GUY FARROW

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

A MILESTONE MOMENT FOR CONTRACEPTION

Maxwellia's Lovima® is part of a revolution for women who can now choose to buy the pill

Since the introduction of the contraceptive pill over 60 years ago, women have needed a prescription – often as well as an appointment with a doctor or nurse – to get it. But things are changing. In a long-awaited and groundbreaking move, contraceptive pills – such as Maxwellia's Lovima®, a daily progestogen-only pill (desogestrel 75mcg) – are now available to buy over the counter. All you need is a short consultation with a pharmacist. This liberating change enables women to make their own choices without the need for a doctor's appointment. Here, three women reveal how Maxwellia's Lovima® is helping to make contraception more accessible than ever.

Lovima 75 microgram
film-coated tablets desogestrel

MICHELLE

For Michelle Thomas, life as a new mother means finding ways to make daily tasks as fuss-free as possible. 'Having a baby means I don't have much spare time or energy, so being able to buy Maxwellia's Lovima® in my local pharmacy has been fantastic. It's so easy! It's a great contraception option for someone who's breastfeeding, and I don't have to make a special trip to the doctor's surgery to get a prescription.'

CIANNA

You can also order Maxwellia's Lovima® online, an aspect Cianna Raynsford-Small has found hugely beneficial. 'Having this pill delivered direct to my door is so much easier than trying to find time for an appointment to get a prescription, and then having to collect it,' says Cianna. 'Plus, it arrives in discreet packaging, so anyone who sees my post is none the wiser.'

ANNA

Anna McGlynn says having a short consultation with a pharmacist to get her contraception has been a game changer. 'Juggling work and family life doesn't leave much time for doctor's appointments, particularly as I'm not unwell,' she says. 'I choose this pill because it's convenient and works for me, so being able to buy Maxwellia's Lovima® at my local pharmacy has made my life a little bit easier, which is great.'

Lovima

For more information, visit lovima.com or follow Lovima® on Facebook and Instagram @lovimalife

WORDS: SOPHIE THOMPSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKAEL BUCK. LOVIMA® 75MCG FILM-COATED TABLETS. DESOGESTREL. ALWAYS READ THE LABEL.

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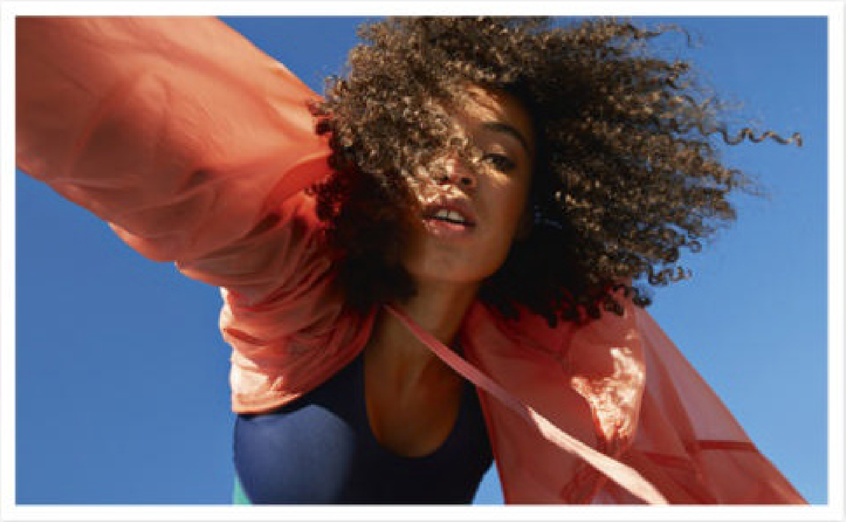

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Fashion

EDITED BY

OONAGH BRENNAN

Magical

adjective:
beautiful or delightful in a way that seems removed from everyday life

With a flash of glitter you disappear into the night. The magic hour has arrived; don't wait up.

DRESS, £370, Alice + Olivia at The Outnet. EARRINGS, £125, Shrimps

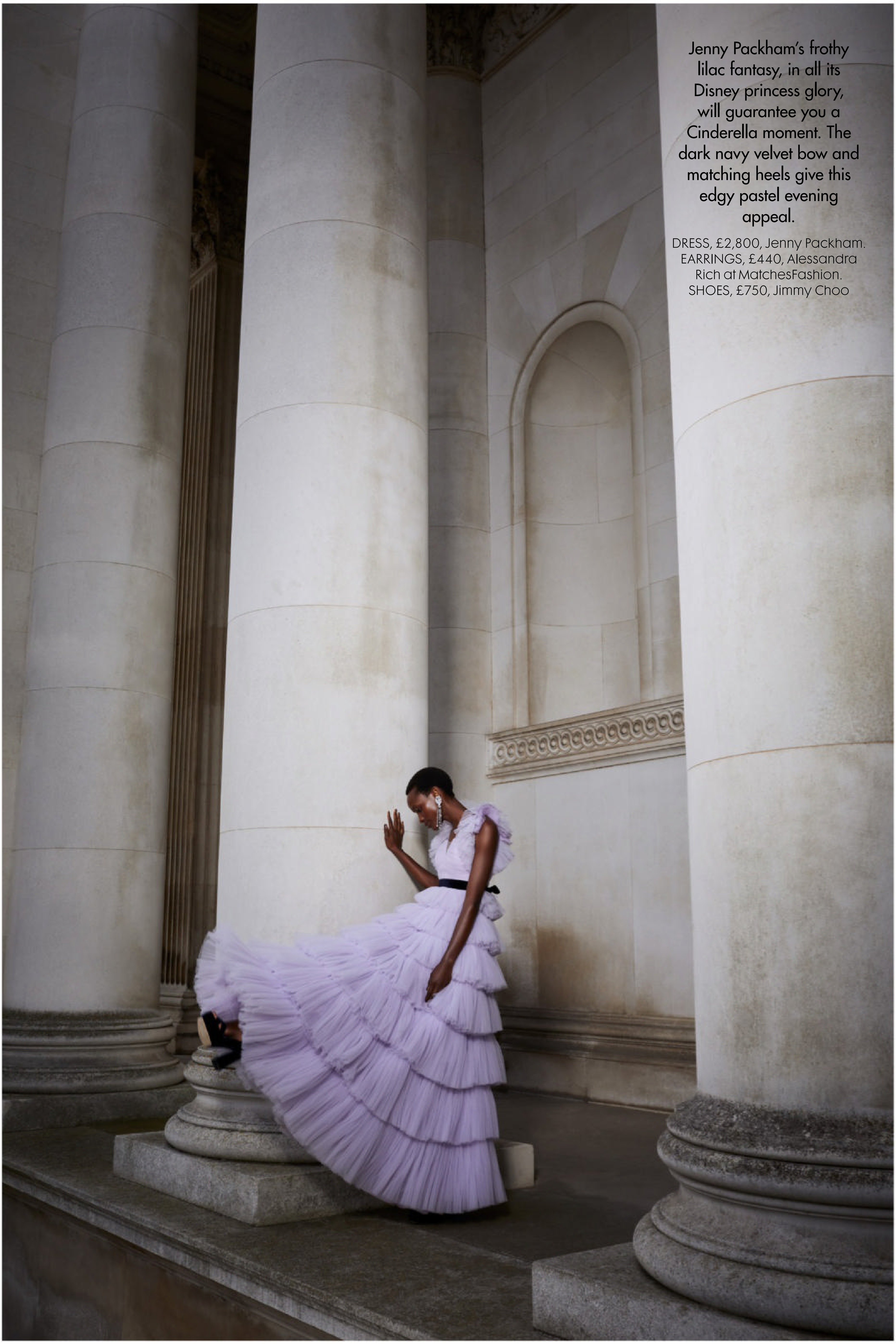
PHOTOGRAPHY
KATE DAVIS-MACLEOD

PHOTOGRAPHY
KATE DAVIS-MACLEOD

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

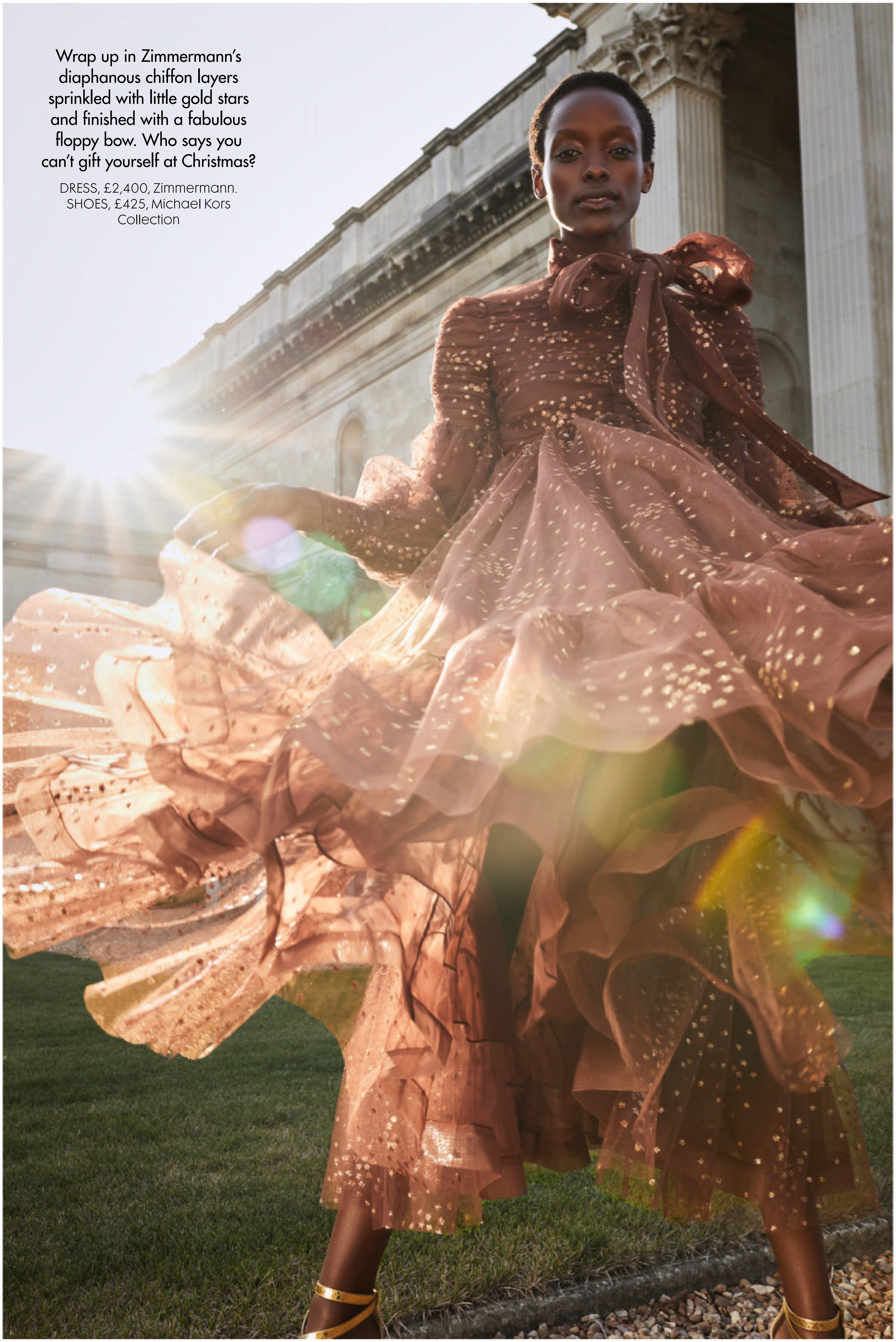
DAZZLE UNTIL DAWN IN PASTEL TULLE GOWNS, GLITTERING GOLD SHIFTS AND SHIMMERING SEQUIN SENSATIONS

STYLING
OONAGH
BRENNAN



Jenny Packham's frothy lilac fantasy, in all its Disney princess glory, will guarantee you a Cinderella moment. The dark navy velvet bow and matching heels give this edgy pastel evening appeal.

DRESS, £2,800, Jenny Packham. EARRINGS, £440, Alessandra Rich at MatchesFashion. SHOES, £750, Jimmy Choo



Wrap up in Zimmermann's diaphanous chiffon layers sprinkled with little gold stars and finished with a fabulous floppy bow. Who says you can't gift yourself at Christmas?

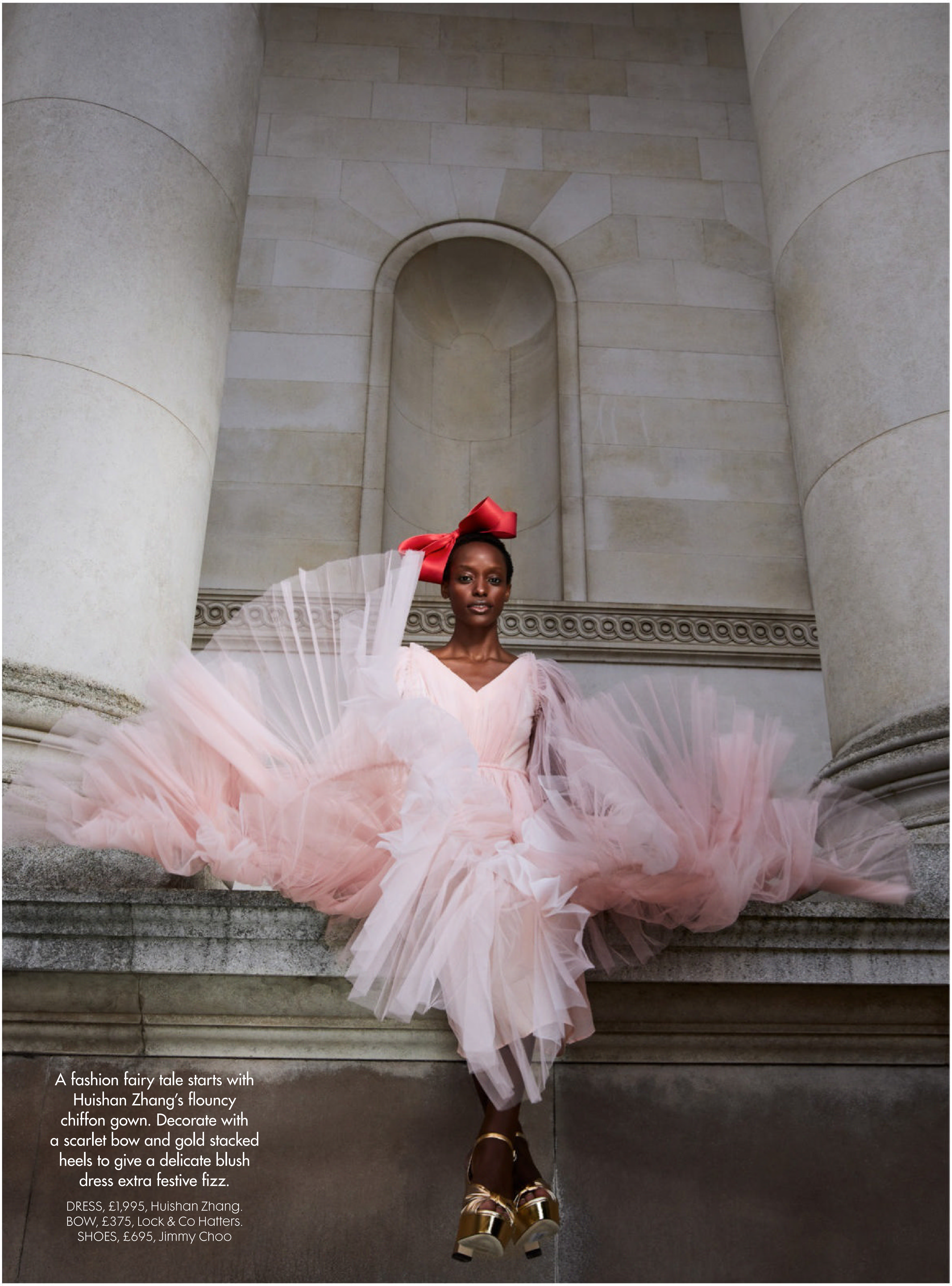
DRESS, £2,400, Zimmermann. SHOES, £425, Michael Kors Collection

Michael Kors' gold glitter ball dress is a true 'gilty' pleasure. Spectacular sequins are set to be the biggest new festive trend, so slip this on and see how you shine (warning: you will need shades).

DRESS, £4,025, Michael Kors Collection. EARRINGS, model's own. SHOES, £695, Jimmy Choo

Pour yourself into Armani's shimmering one-shoulder number and you're instantly the most ravishing guest in the room. The asymmetric neckline gives this classic a cool, contemporary twist. Just add collarbone-sweeping earrings.

Dress, £17,160, Giorgio Armani



A fashion fairy tale starts with Huishan Zhang's flouncy chiffon gown. Decorate with a scarlet bow and gold stacked heels to give a delicate blush dress extra festive fizz.

DRESS, £1,995, Huishan Zhang.
BOW, £375, Lock & Co Hatters.
SHOES, £695, Jimmy Choo

There's something so compelling about a red dress at Christmas, especially when it's Dior's delicate layers of sheer scarlet heaven. Just one swoosh and we're smitten.

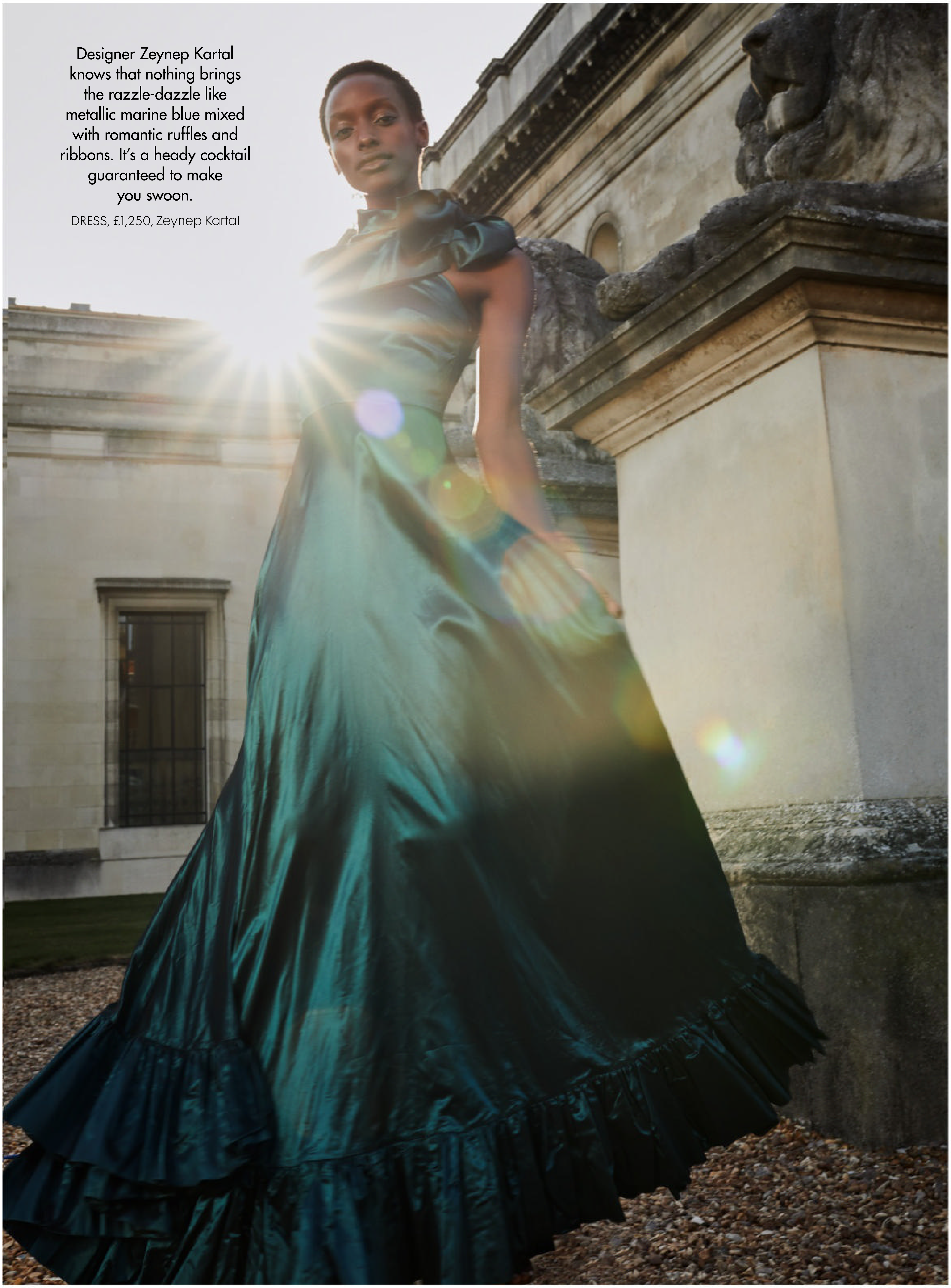
DRESS, POA, Dior

Maximise the impact of your faithful LBD with a bountiful bow, slick cream blazer and bling tights. The new daring mood calls for a thigh-skimmer worn with stacked heels, but back in reality it would look just as chic in longer lengths.

TUX, from £1,650, The Deck London.
BOW, £575, Lock & Co Hatters.
DRESS, around £700, No.21.
TIGHTS, £26, Heist

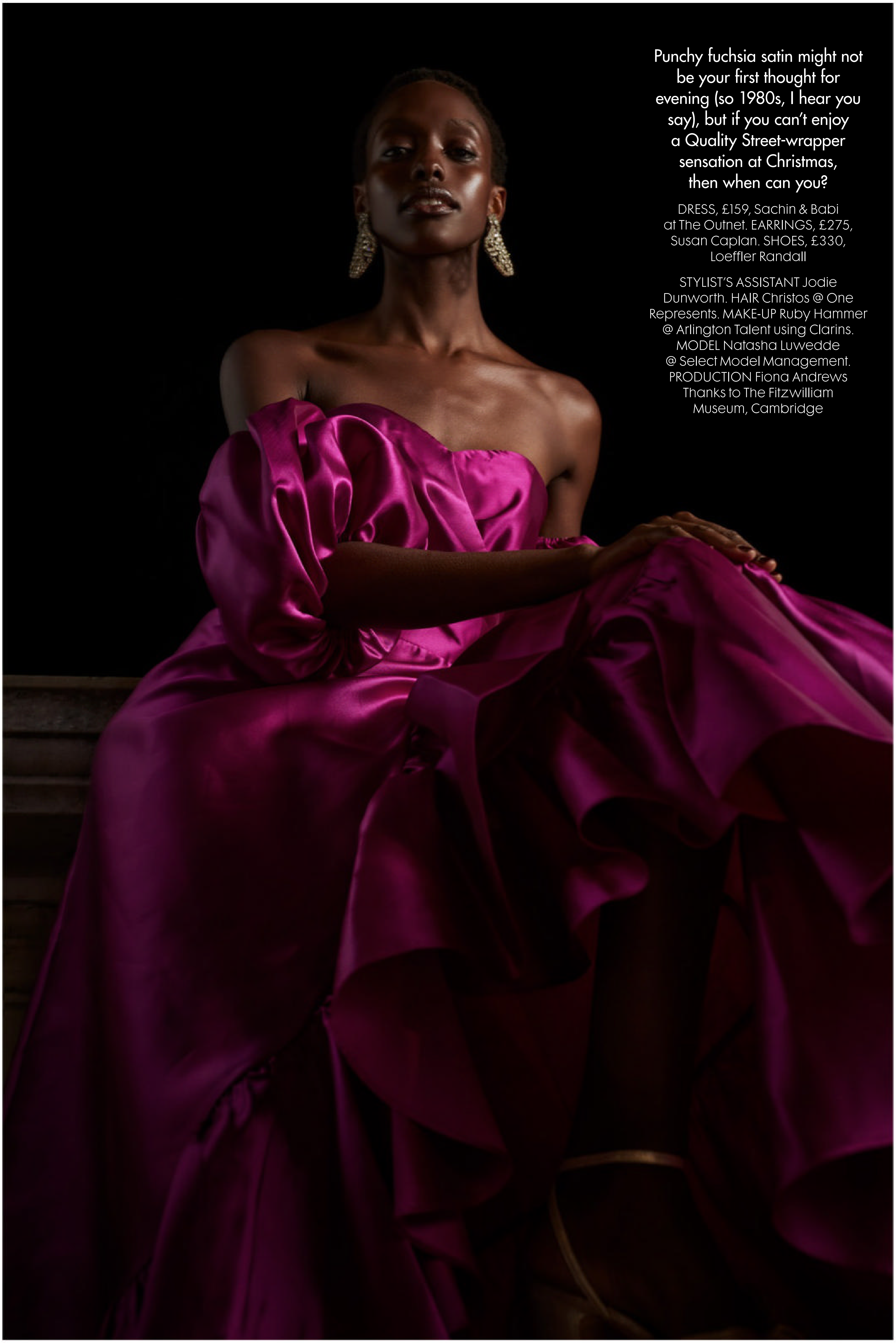
Lanvin's elegant cream shift dress is given old-school Hollywood appeal with a lavish pink marabou trim and glittery cocktail earrings. Finish with skinny heels and a glass of Champagne.

DRESS, £3,491, Lanvin.
EARRINGS, £440, Alessandra Rich at MatchesFashion



Designer Zeynep Kartal knows that nothing brings the razzle-dazzle like metallic marine blue mixed with romantic ruffles and ribbons. It's a heady cocktail guaranteed to make you swoon.

DRESS, £1,250, Zeynep Kartal



Punchy fuchsia satin might not be your first thought for evening (so 1980s, I hear you say), but if you can't enjoy a Quality Street-wrapper sensation at Christmas, then when can you?

DRESS, £159, Sachin & Babi at The Outnet. EARRINGS, £275, Susan Caplan. SHOES, £330, Loeffler Randall

STYLIST'S ASSISTANT Jodie Dunworth. HAIR Christos @ One Represents. MAKE-UP Ruby Hammer @ Arlington Talent using Clarins. MODEL Natasha Luwedde @ Select Model Management. PRODUCTION Fiona Andrews Thanks to The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

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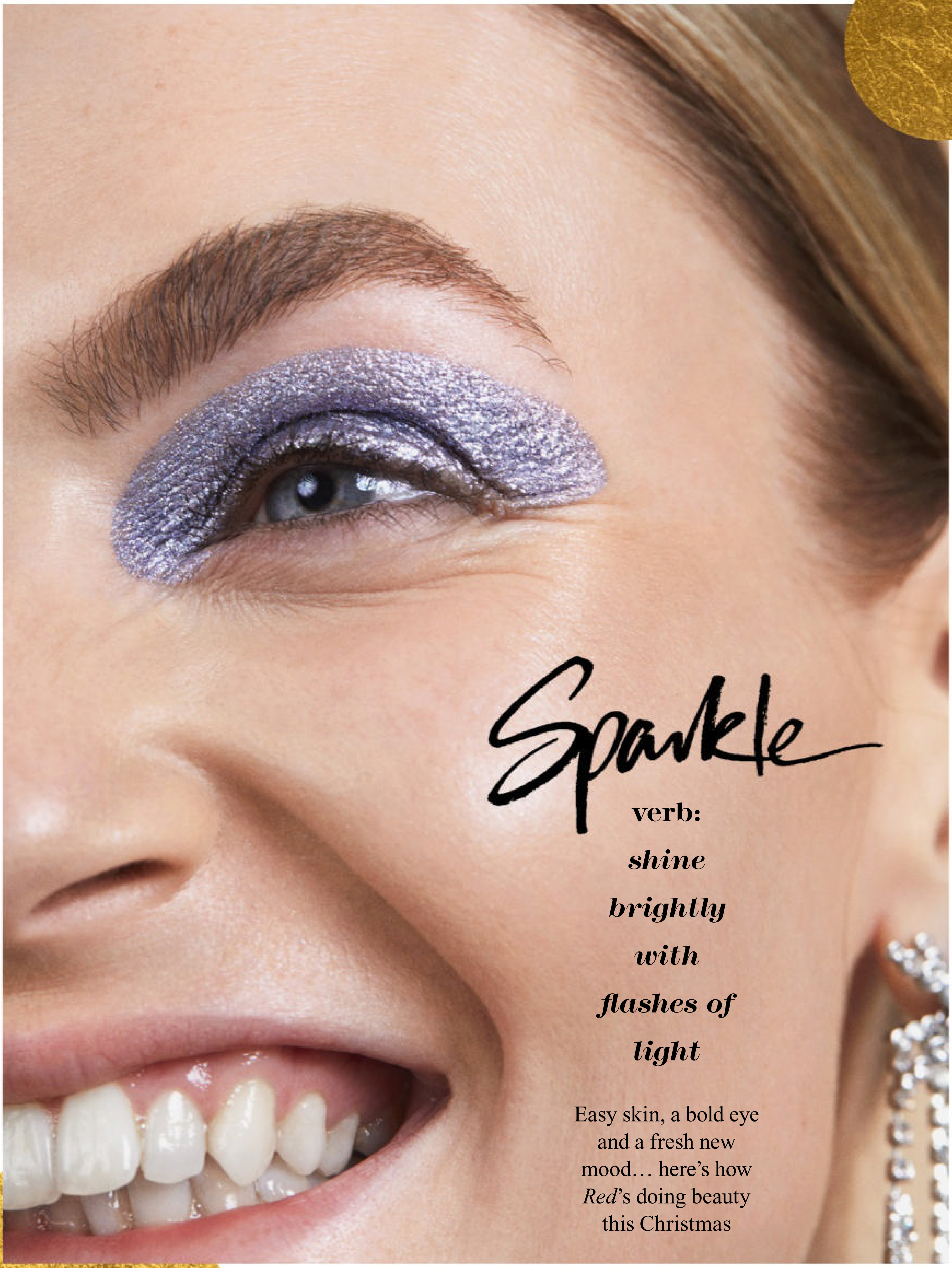
Beauty

EDITED BY
EVE CAMERON



Sparkle

verb:
shine
brightly
with
flashes of
light

Easy skin, a bold eye and a fresh new mood… here's how *Red*'s doing beauty this Christmas

PHOTOGRAPHY
BILLIE SCHEEPERS

WORDS
ALEXANDRA
FRIEND

PHOTOGRAPHY
BILLIE SCHEEPERS

WHEN MAKE-UP IS A MOOD

A BURST OF CRYSTALS, A NEON CLOUD AND A SILVER FOIL LID. OPTIMISM IS OUR BEAUTY LOOK THIS CHRISTMAS, WHAT'S YOURS?

The first thing to know about *Red*'s holiday make-up shoot is that it was fun, fast, and we all walked away feeling like we'd had the time of our lives. The second is that every look here needed less than a handful of products. And the third? There were no rules… other than letting skin look like skin, says make-up artist Adam de Cruz. 'Skin looks gorgeous – and more youthful – with as little product on it as possible. Clean-looking skin is also a fantastic base for detail; colour "pops" more on a face that's not covered in foundation.'

De Cruz massaged his ADC 01 High Performance Moisturiser, from £55, into our model Eve's skin, bringing a healthy glow to the surface. He then used concealer on any redness and blemishes, blending it out on to the rest of the skin. Brilliant new-gen concealers (try Skin In Motion Blend It Sweat-Proof Concealer, £16, or Lancôme Teint Idole Ultra Wear All Over Concealer, £25) can be built up and buffed out with fingers or a brush for a base that's opaque where needed and sheer everywhere else. And then… nothing, not even blush. De Cruz let Eve's own colour show through by brushing away any traces of base from her cheeks with his fingers, but if that feels too sparse, pat on the barest amount of something half tint, half dew; try Jones Road Lip & Cheek Stick, £30.50. On lips, layer pencil under something balm-like. *Red*'s favourite combination is Code8 Lip Surrealist Lip Liner, £20, with Decorté Rouge Decorté Shine Lipstick in Phantasmal Flower, £32. And after that? 'Well, it's just fun, isn't it?' says de Cruz. 'The guideline is if it makes you feel good, you're doing it right.'

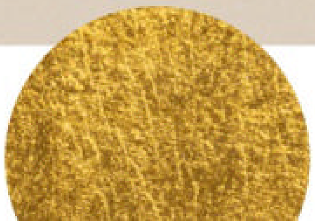
SKIN IN MOTION
BLEND IT CONCEALER
SKIN IN MOTION
BLEND IT CONCEALER

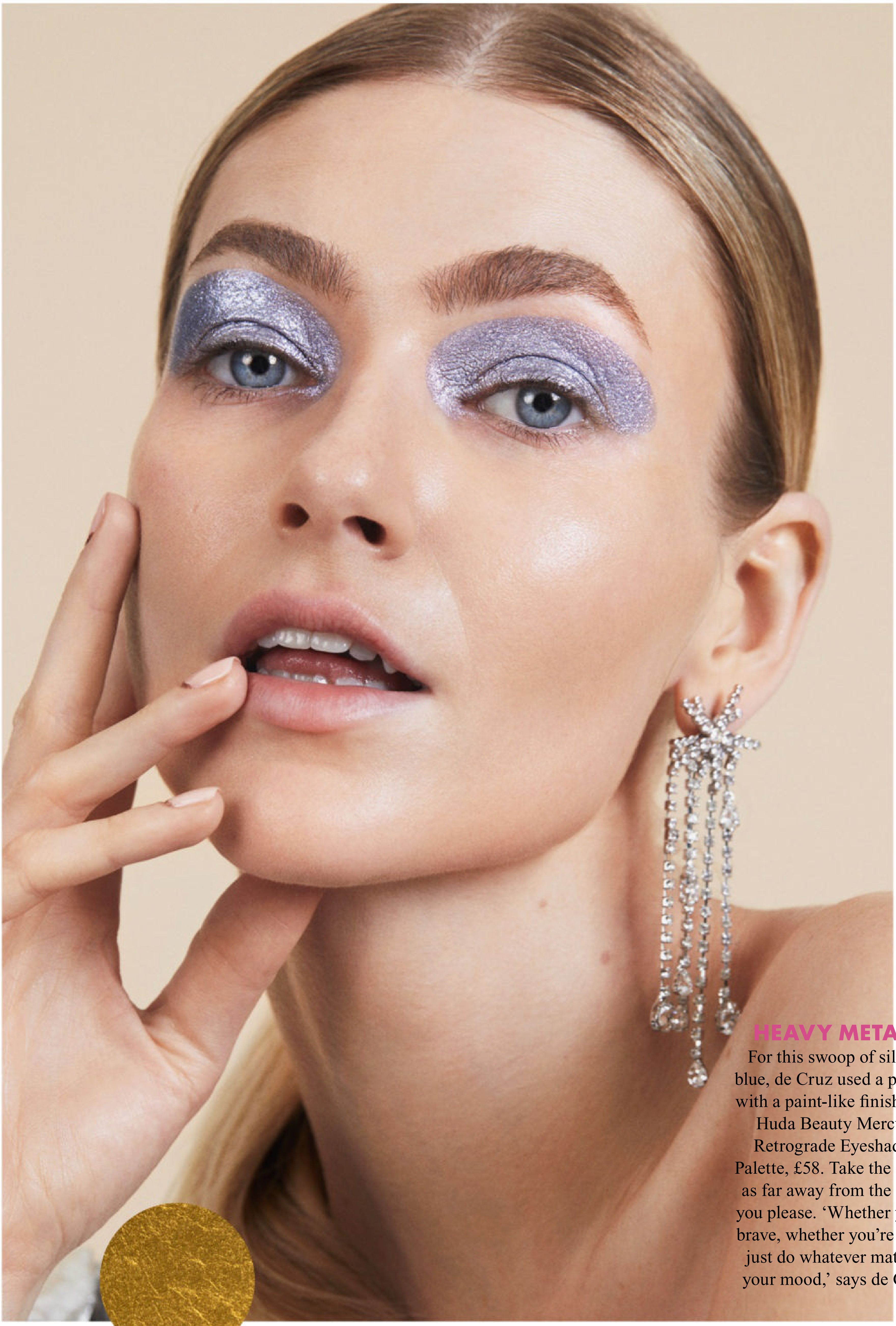
JONES ROAD LIP & CHEEK STICK in MAUVE ROSE and TAWNY NUDE, £30.50 each; CODE8 LIP SURREALIST LIP LINER in SALVADOR and PABLO, £20 each; SKIN IN MOTION BLEND IT SWEAT-PROOF CONCEALER in shades 1 and 3, £16 each

DRESS, BERNADETTE. EARRINGS, V BY LAURA VANN

ELECTRIC DREAMS

Neon make-up was a joyful hit at the winter shows. Here, make-up artist Adam de Cruz applied electric pink densely on the lids (from Danessa Myricks Waterproof Cream Vivid Palette, £36) and smudged it out for a cloud-like finish. Brows were brushed up with Surratt Expressioniste Brow Pomade, £30, and no mascara kept it modern… though we wouldn't argue with a lash tint.



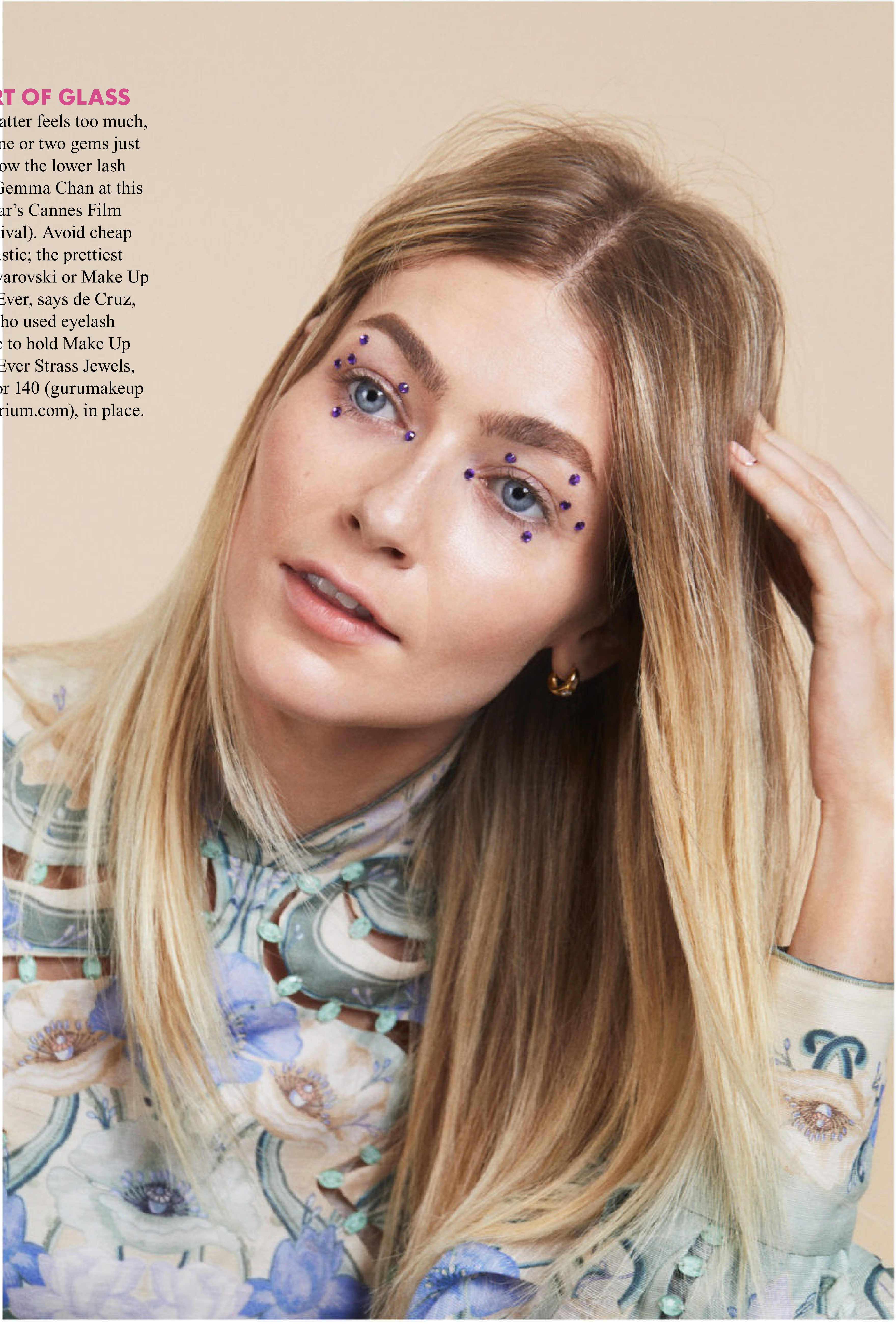


HEAVY METALS

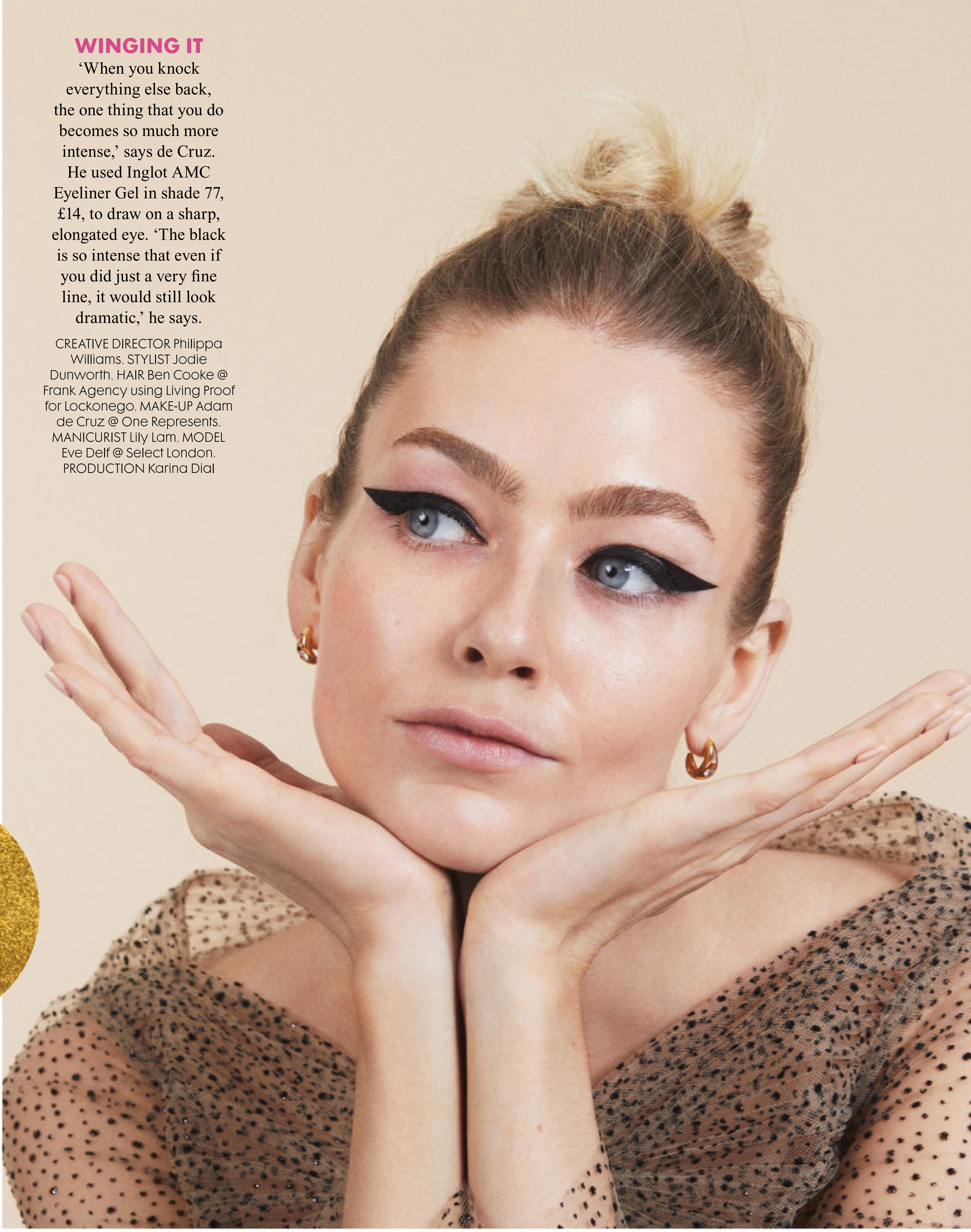
For this swoop of silvery blue, de Cruz used a powder with a paint-like finish from Huda Beauty Mercury Retrograde Eyeshadow Palette, £58. Take the colour as far away from the lid as you please. ‘Whether you’re brave, whether you’re shy… just do whatever matches your mood,’ says de Cruz.

ART OF GLASS

If a scatter feels too much, try one or two gems just below the lower lash (see Gemma Chan at this year's Cannes Film Festival). Avoid cheap plastic; the prettiest are Swarovski or Make Up For Ever, says de Cruz, who used eyelash glue to hold Make Up For Ever Strass Jewels, £18 for 140 (gurumakeup emporium.com), in place.



OPPOSITE PAGE: EARRINGS, MAJE. THIS PAGE: DRESS, ZIMMERMANN. EARRINGS, V BY LAURA VANN



WINGING IT

‘When you knock everything else back, the one thing that you do becomes so much more intense,’ says de Cruz. He used Inglot AMC Eyeliner Gel in shade 77, £14, to draw on a sharp, elongated eye. ‘The black is so intense that even if you did just a very fine line, it would still look dramatic,’ he says.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Philippa Williams. STYLIST Jodie Dunworth. HAIR Ben Cooke @ Frank Agency using Living Proof for Lockonego. MAKE-UP Adam de Cruz @ One Represents. MANICURIST Lily Lam. MODEL Eve Delf @ Select London. PRODUCTION Karina Dial

THE EYES HAVE IT

NEW BUYS FOR MODERN MAXIMALISTS

Guerlain
BOBBI BROWN
BOBBI BROWN
MAT
MAT
sisley
stila
bareMinerals
MINERALIST EYELINER
bareMinerals
MINERALIST EYELINER
bareMinerals
MINERALIST EYELINER

GUERLAIN
MAD EYES
CONTRAST
SHADOW DUO
in ICY GREY
and DAZZLING
SILVER, £28

SISLEY
PHYTO-KHOL
STAR
WATERPROOF
EYELINER in
MATTE ONYX
and MATTE
PEACOCK,
£39 each

BOBBI BROWN
LONG-WEAR
CREAM SHADOW
STICK MULTI
CHROME in
INCANDESCENT
and CELESTIAL,
£25 each

STILA
MAGNIFICENT
METALS SHIMMER
& GLOW LIQUID
EYE SHADOW
in KITTEN
KALEIDOSCOPE
and CONTESSA,
£24 each

VIOLETTE_FR
YEUX PAINT
LIQUID
EYESHADOW
+ LINER in
SCARABÉE
D'OR, £27

PAT
McGRATH
LABS
CELESTIAL
ODYSSEY
LUXE QUAD
in BRONZE
BOREALIS,
£42

BAREMINERALS
MINERALIST LASTING
EYELINER in
GRAPHITE, ONYX and
AQUAMARINE, £18 each

TOP, KHAITE AT THE OUTNET. EARRINGS, V BY LAURA VANN

Cool to be kind

FROM SKINCARE TO BUSINESS, BEAUTY'S NEW MODE IS ONE OF COMPASSION

When Alexia Inge, brand hunter, trend forecaster and co-CEO of Cult Beauty, shares the next big thing in beauty, you listen. Even when it appears to have nothing to do with beauty at all. 'Kindness – it's cool again!' she says. 'Until quite recently, society's message was that we could always be better, could always be more, more, more, usually through striving and competition. But since the pandemic – and the period of introspection that came with it – I think we're realising that more isn't always more, and maybe there's a better way of doing things. Kindness is the word that's coming up again and again, from the way we look after our skin to the way we do business.' And Inge should know, having just sold Cult Beauty (a beauty e-tailer with genuinely caring customer service and support for 'conscious' brands with modern values) for a whopping £275m.

You could say that the beauty kindness revolution began with self-care; using mindfulness techniques and grooming rituals to help preserve mental health. 'During lockdown, being kind to myself in that ritualistic way was a really positive experience,' says Inge. 'Just spending a bit more time brushing my hair and feeling the bristles against my scalp… even my dad started using body oil because the smell made him feel good.'

Kari Molvar, author of *The New Beauty: A Modern Look At Beauty, Culture, And Fashion* (Gestalten), agrees, and points out that it's not a huge leap from self-care to outward-facing acts of kindness. 'The self-care boom has inspired people to see beauty as a form of therapy. There are a lot of mental health benefits associated with nurturing your body, tending to your skin, or getting a massage, for example. But I think we've long known that performing acts of kindness for others boosts our own happiness, too. We're thinking more about how our actions impact those around us, with companies and individuals giving back and acting more sustainably.'

Beauty Banks, founded by journalist Sali Hughes and beauty PR Jo Jones in 2018 to tackle the UK's growing hygiene poverty problem, is a perfect example. As is campaign-turned-trust Beauty Backed, created by skincare expert Caroline Hirons and make-up artist Lisa Potter-Dixon to provide financial help and emotional support to industry professionals left struggling by the pandemic. Skincare brand Simple and presenter Mollie King have partnered with Kindness.org in a #ChooseKindness campaign, with the aim of inspiring 1m acts of kindness across the UK. And beauty broadcaster and diversity advocate Dr Ateh Jewel has secured financial backing from P&G's Olay for her Education Foundation, established to fund Black and mixed heritage undergraduates through universities and arts programmes. The tagline? 'Kindness With Action'.

Then, of course, there are the brands with a triple bottom line, ranking positive impact on community and environment alongside profit. When REN challenged itself to become zero waste by the end of 2021, it pledged to share the journey with fellow brands Caudalie, Biossance, Herbivore Botanicals and Youth To The People, creating allies rather than competitors (#WeAreAllies). British brand Evolve Organic Beauty is another favourite here at *Red*, with a business manifesto that factors in kindness at every stage, including a supply chain built around workers' rights and a pending living wage certification. 'Kindness is not a one-off gesture, it's a 360º approach in all aspects of the business,' says founder and CEO Laura Rudoe. 'We aim to lead from the heart as a purpose-driven business with a mission to make a difference.'

From macro to micro (quite literally, as it happens), skincare is perhaps the beauty category that has taken the kindness manifesto closest to its heart, with a new emphasis on giving skin a helping hand rather than a barrier-stripping slap in the face. 'The latest wave of skincare brands focus less on aggressive, fast-acting results and more on nurturing the skin's barrier, maintaining a healthily diverse microbiome and aligning more with self-care,' says Inge, who champions new biome-friendly brands Skinfix and Cultured. 'It's slow beauty. It's practising skin kindness.' In anti-ageing, Superkind by Tata Harper aims to revitalise without stressing the delicate acid mantle, giving those with reactive skin the chance for better bounce and glow along with the rest of us. In colour cosmetics, kindness manifests as better inclusivity, with the success of Black-founded brands, such as Fenty Beauty, Uoma, Pat McGrath Labs, and 50-something founded brands, including Studio 10 and Trinny London, considerably broadening the beauty agenda, while MAC, Illamasqua and Morphe make beauty a more welcoming space for the LGBTQ+ community.

REN Bio Retinoid Youth Serum, £62 Plant-derived smoother with ceramides for extra care.

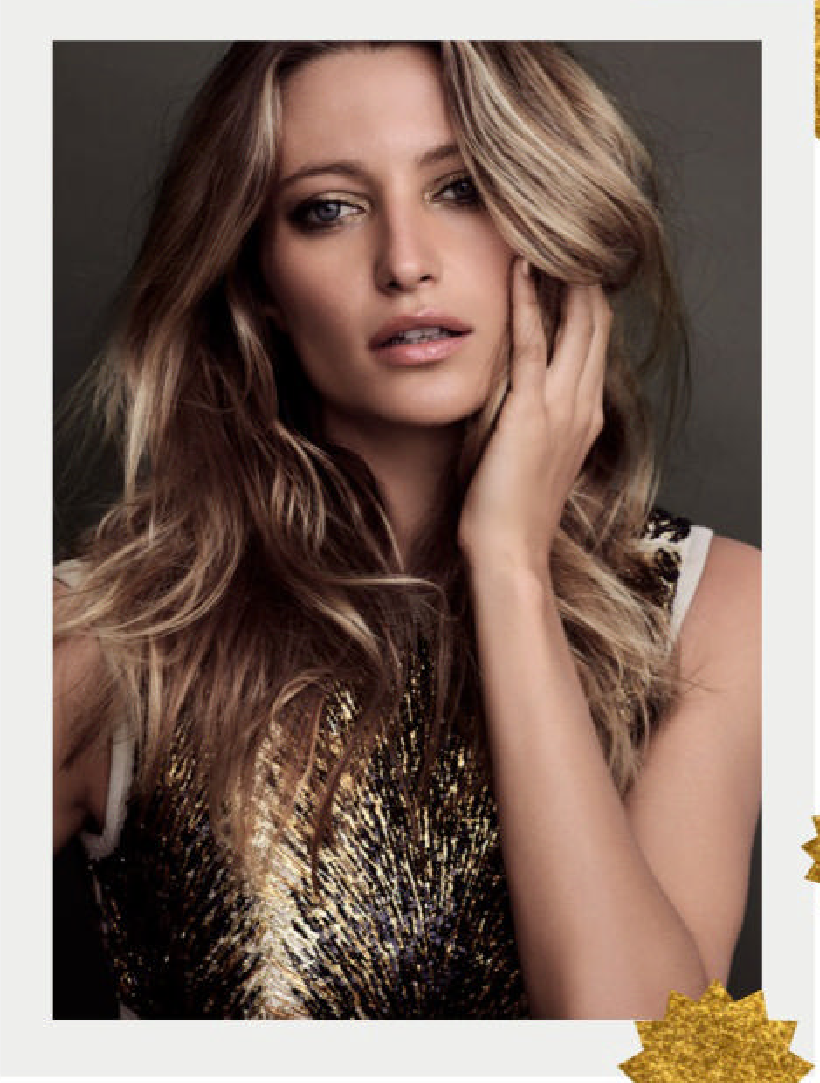
Cultured Biome One Mask, £48 Exfoliate for brightness, but make it biome-friendly.

Evolve Pure Prebiotic Roll-On Deodorant, £11 Kind to skin and smells dreamy.

Tata Harper Superkind Bio-Barrier Serum, £113 Premium anti-ageing that won't stress delicate skin.

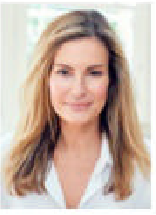
And across all categories, new-generation beauty brands are increasingly vegan as well as cruelty free, with great strides being made towards a more compassionate ethos for all creatures. Beauty is as beauty does? We think so… and here's hoping that the kindness in the beauty industry can make the world at large a better place.

WORDS: BETHAN COLE. PHOTOGRAPHY: TRUNK ARCHIVE



ON MY WISH LIST...

The BEAUTY influencer



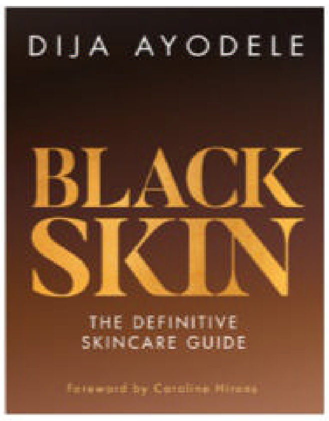
RED'S BEAUTY DIRECTOR EVE CAMERON SHARES A FEW OF HER FAVOURITE THINGS

LARRY KING
HAIRCARE
MY NANNA'S MOUSSE
Hershesons
ZHOOSH FOAM

SLIP MOONLIGHT DUO LARGE SCRUNCHIES, £45 for 2

FOAM PARTY

As comebacks go, mousse isn't the easiest sell (too many memories of sticky stuff that left hair crispy), but when two of London's most sought-after stylists launch one, it's time to reconsider. Worked through wet hair pre blow- or diffuser-drying, Larry King's My Nanna's Mousse, £24, gives swishy fullness with the feeling that you have nothing in your hair at all; likewise, Hershesons Zhoosh Foam, £12 – which can also be used to perk up second-day hair and freshen roots like a dry shampoo. My finishing touch is a sparkly scrunchie.


DIJA AYODELE
BLACK SKIN
THE DEFINITIVE SKINCARE GUIDE
Foreword by Caroline Hirons

Skincare queen

There's nothing that renowned aesthetician Dija Ayodele doesn't know about skin, and it's distilled here in a quintessential guide for women of colour. Expect myth-busting advice and product recommendations. *Black Skin (HQ, £20) by Dija Ayodele*

EH
EMMA HARDIE
MORINGA LUXURY BATH & SHOWER OIL
EMILIO PUCCI
ACQUA DI PARMA

EMMA HARDIE MORINGA LUXURY BATH & SHOWER OIL, £38

SCENTS OF OCCASION

I hope I find these under my tree this Christmas: Jo Malone London's Dining Candles Collection, £50, fragranced with grapefruit, rosemary and peppermint to scentscape the dining room without competing with the food. Then there's Acqua di Parma's Notte di Stelle room diffuser, from £83, a stylish collab with Emilio Pucci that supports Save the Children's Rewrite the Future campaign. Oh, and dear Santa, could I have Emma Hardie's delicious new bath oil, too, please? I have been good.

EMMA LUCY ROCKS

EMMA LUCY WORRY LESS ROCKS, £60

Good vibrations

Here's a fresh take on worry dolls from author, psychic and crystal whisperer Emma Lucy Knowles. The idea is to select the crystal you're drawn to via the ritual described in the pouch and keep it, or the full set, with you, allowing its energy to ease your worries and help you let go of what isn't serving you. Feel the frown lines disappear…

Because every woman needs a pink powder puff…

LAURA MERCIER
PUFF PERFECTION VELOUR PUFF
LAURA MERCIER

LAURA MERCIER PUFF PERFECTION VELOUR PUFF, £14.50

PHOTOGRAPHY: PATRIC SHAW, DAVID VENNI

THE BEST... HEATED HAIR TOOLS

Whatever your style, from tumbling curls to a sleek blow-dry, there's a tool to help create it. Of the 161 we tested, these were the top performers

Red
APPROVED
2021

WORDS: CHARLOTTE BITMEAD. PRODUCT TESTING: JASMINE LIM, AMIE PEARCE. PHOTOGRAPHY: MATTHEW EADES

THE ONE FOR A SALON-STYLE BLOW-DRY

DYSON SUPERSONIC HAIR DRYER (£299.99) **Score: 86/100**
Achieving a professional-looking blow-dry was easy with this high-tech dryer, according to our testers. Many also said their styles lasted longer, with more body and volume compared with results from their usual hairdryer.

THE ONE FOR TEXTURED HAIR

REMINGTON CURL & STRAIGHT CONFIDENCE ROTATING HOT AIR STYLER (£59.99) **Score: 70/100**
Testers with textured hair loved this tool's soft bristle attachment, which helped to produce a smooth, straight blow-dry without knots or tangles.

THE ONE FOR CURLS

T3 WHIRL TRIO (£260) **Score: 77/100**
With three attachments, this versatile heated wand produced most types of curls, from undone beachy waves to more uniform ringlets, without snagging or pulling the hair.

HOW WE TESTED

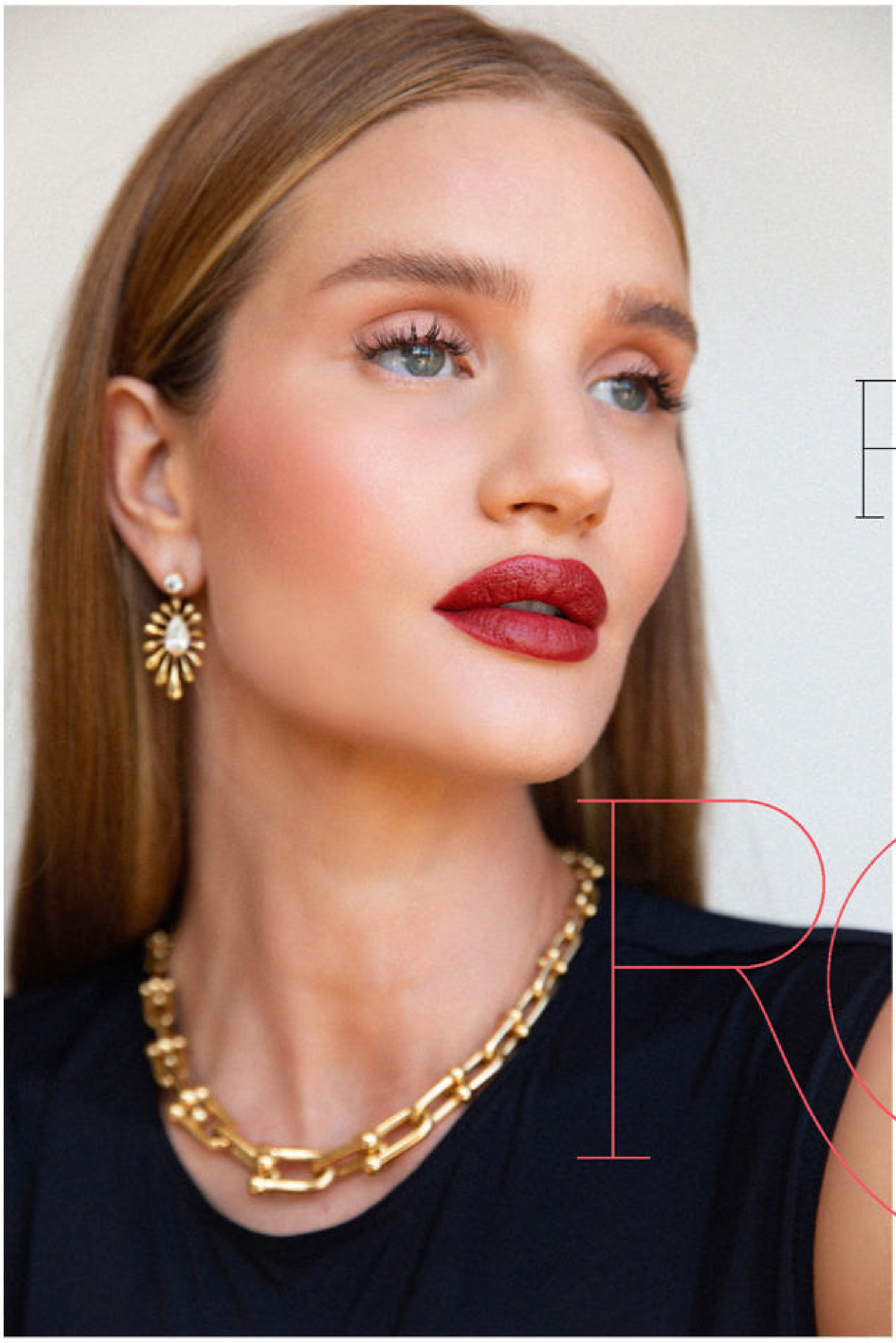
We asked 800 volunteers with a variety of hair types to review 161 heated styling tools, assessing their speed and ease of use and the looks they produced. In the lab, we carried out a temperature test to ensure each tool reached its promised heat.

THE PORTABLE ONE

GHD UNPLUGGED (£299) **Score: 82/100**
Ideal for refreshing styles while on the go, this compact and lightweight cordless straightener impressed most of our testers with its ability to create glossy, sleek looks and loose waves.

THE TIME-SAVING ONE

GHD GLIDE HOT BRUSH (£139) **Score: 86/100**
An impressive 96% of our panel reported how easily this hot brush detangled hair, while 89% said it tamed flyaways. Some also commented on the speed with which it created smooth, shiny styles: even faster than when using straighteners.



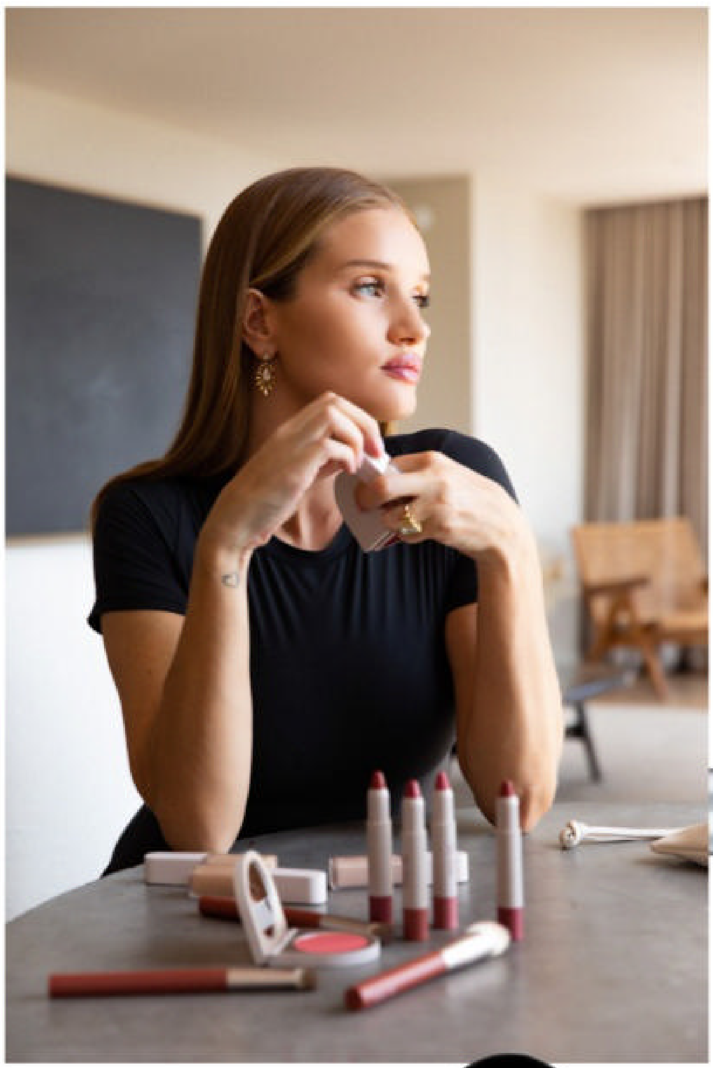
THE FUTURE IS ROSIE

MODEL TURNED ENTREPRENEUR ROSIE HUNTINGTON-WHITELEY SHARES HER SKINCARE DISCOVERIES AND REVEALS HOW HER NEW BRAND IS HELPING TO SHIFT THE BEAUTY LANDSCAPE

Christmas is simple in our house. It's food, it's presents, it's music, it's a bit of alcohol, it's board games and getting together with family around the table. My son is four now and last Christmas was the first time he really got into it. It's just wonderful to see Christmas through a child's eyes. ***We'll be in the UK this year.*** I'm renovating a place in London – Jason [actor Jason Statham, Rosie's fiancé] and I have always loved interiors and architecture. As I've got older, I find I'm inspired more and more by design. That and travel. Having travelled every week for modelling work since the age of 16, I hadn't thought about how much I liked it until we couldn't travel because of Covid. I now crave to see the world. ***The silver lining of not being distracted by travelling and other commitments has been that it's allowed me to put my all into my make-up and skincare brand.*** After 20 years in the hair and make-up chair, working with amazing experts, I felt I had a real point of view, but I didn't want to launch just another celebrity brand. That's why I started Rose Inc with my content platform, back in 2018. The idea was to create and build a network because I feel that community-led brands are where there's real authenticity and integrity. ***My CEO, Caroline Hadfield, and I connected over Pipette, a mother-and-baby skincare line she had created at Amyris, the biotech company I ended up partnering with.*** At the time, I was a new mother and I was blown away by the innovations at the company and its sustainable proprietary ingredients. Like the skincare, Rose Inc's make-up is packed with beneficial ingredients. That certain things *aren't* included is table stakes for a modern beauty brand. ***We leaned into packaging innovation, making it as sustainable as possible.*** I had this idea initially that there would be metal and gold and foil – all very glamorous. What we've ended up with is something minimalistic, which was a pivot for me. But it's recyclable, some of the products are refillable and we use a high percentage of PCR [post-consumer recycled] content.

I'm very particular; a perfectionist. I'm also a hard worker and, at 34, I've built up resilience, but a lot of the decisions I've had to make have been emotional. It's been stressful, but it's also been a wonderful experience to build a team, going from three employees to nearly 50 in just a few years.

I think women really just want to feel the very best version of themselves. They want to look polished and put-together, but they also want it to be effortless. They want products they can apply in a few minutes with their fingertips in their bathrooms or on the go, so that's something I've focused on, with versatile colours to take you from morning to night.



As you get older, you know what works for you and what doesn't. You're not going to see me on the red carpet with dramatic lime-green eyeshadow and purple lipstick. I remember my mother saying to me when I was a young girl that make-up should enhance, not hide, what you have. If you have beautiful eyes, play them up; if you have a great mouth, play that up, and don't worry about the features you don't like.

Because I've had acne-prone skin my entire adult life, just like my mother, I'm diligent with skincare. My beauty journey over the last 20 years has been about trying to manage the acne and congestion. I've had years when it's been more managed and periods when it's really flared up. It's so challenging because it does knock your self-esteem and it gets frustrating when you have a barrage of advice from people: cut out dairy, do this, do that. There's not really a one-size-fits-all kind of solution.

One of the biggest revelations for me, though, was changing all my beauty products to be non-comedogenic. That's why my entire Rose Inc line is non-comedogenic – developed without potentially pore-clogging ingredients. IS Clinical products have been game changers for me, as has a US brand called Face Reality Skincare, which is incredibly affordable. When I made that shift, my skin quickly improved.

I usually try to have two facials a month – with extractions. In London, I see Nilam Holmes and Kate Kerr. I really believe in LED therapy as well, to kill the acne-causing bacteria and heal the skin. You'll often find me at home lying under a panel of blue and red LEDs.

If I'm going out and doing my own make-up, I keep it pretty simple. It's maybe a lip (a red lip is always good for the festive season) and a lash, or a smokey eye. I might lean towards a great pair of leather trousers and a lovely blouse from, say, Isabel Marant, a sexy pair of heels and a good coat from a brand like Totême. I invest in lots of coats over the winter season because they're my favourite thing to buy.

I don't feel finished unless I'm wearing a fragrance. I sort of feel partially undressed. My all-time favourite that I go back to time and time again is Byredo Gypsy Water. But I do have lots of perfumes at home – it's a bit like an airport duty-free shop in my bathroom.

Of course, I do feel really great when I have a red carpet event because I've had all the experts working on me for hours. I also feel good with a tan, when I'm in shape because I've been training and when my skin looks clear and glowing. But on a more meaningful, spiritual level, there's nothing better than snuggling up to your child or being in the arms of your lover. That's truly beautiful.

IS CLINICAL YOUTH LIP ELIXIR, £52

IS CLINICAL
YOUTH LIP ELIXIR

ROSE INC LIP SCULPT IN HARP, £19.50

'Nourishing, velvety matte saturated colour'

BYREDO
GYPSY WATER
EAU DE PARFUM

BYREDO GYPSY WATER EAU DE PARFUM, £122

SHU UEMURA ART OF HAIR ESSENCE ABSOLUE OVERNIGHT SERUM, £39.50

'This helped rebuild my hair's strength after my son was born'

I·SHIMMER | by Ayah
THE CITY STRIP LASHES

ISHIMMER BY AYAH THE CITY STRIP LASHES, £18

CHRISTOPHE ROBIN CLEANSING PURIFYING SCRUB WITH SEA SALT, £42

CHRISTOPHE ROBIN
CLEANSING PURIFYING SCRUB

'It removes product build-up and revitalises colour'

ROSE INC SKIN RESOLUTION CLARIFYING TONER, £24.50

'My daily exfoliating toner with acids and pink clay'

AS TOLD TO EVE CAMERON. PHOTOGRAPHY OF ROSIE HUNTINGTON-WHITELEY: ADRIAN MARTIN. PHOTOGRAPHY: ROSE INC

All bright now

Pre- or post-party, these smart buys promise to instantly refresh

Milk Makeup Sunshine Under Eye Tint + Brighten, £26
Cheats a good night's sleep with subtle coverage and skin-loving ingredients.

Oxygen Boutique Cryo Facial Tools, £55
To stimulate lymphatic drainage, depuff and ease redness.

Clarins Calm-Essentiel Redness Corrective Gel, £29
A cooling sheer green tint infused with clary sage to soothe irritated skin.

Caudalie Vinergetic C+ Instant Detox Mask, £23
Mattifies without stripping and visibly restores luminosity – the modern clay mask.

Charlotte Tilbury Cryo Recovery Mask, £49
Ten minutes to a firmer, more lifted complexion. Freeze it, apply it and reuse.

Whind Medina Dew Melting Rose Water Cream, £55
A restorative splash of moisture, scented with velvety petals.

Patchology Roll Model Brightening Roll-On Eye Serum, £20
Pearlescent minerals and fruit extracts help revive tired eyes.

Vieve Skin Nova, £27
This suit-all, skincare-charged primer delivers hydration plus a soft-focus glow.

Skingredients AHA Cleanse, £28. Refills, £25
Kick-start your routine with this brightening blend of acids.

COMPILED BY: MEDINA AZALDIN. PHOTOGRAPHY: GILLES BENSIMON/TRUNK ARCHIVE

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BAZAAR ELLE DECORATION Men'sHealth. ELLE HouseBeautiful

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Living

EDITED BY SARAH KEADY
& EMMA FRANKLIN

Celebration

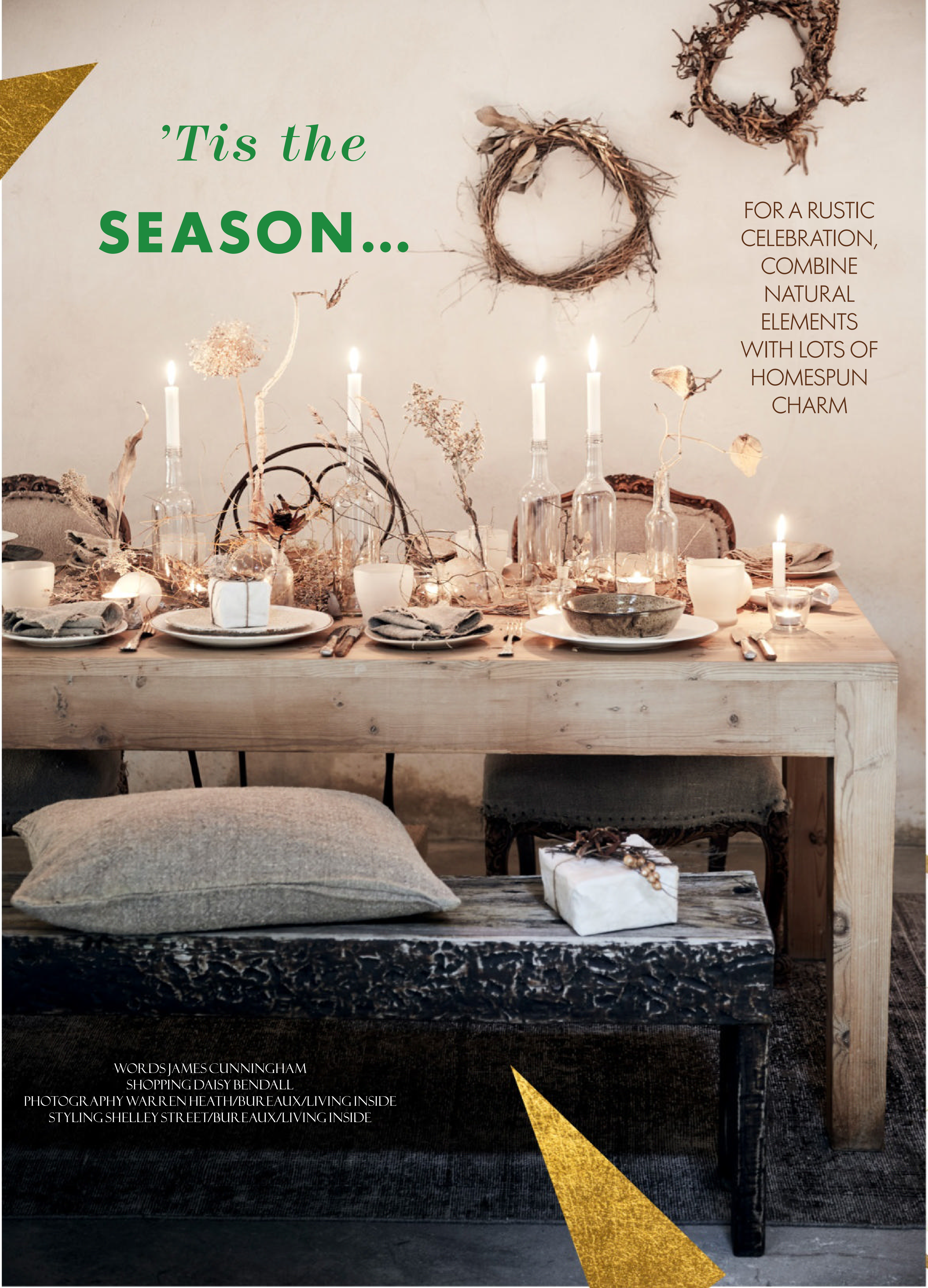
noun: *a social gathering or enjoyable activity held to commemorate something*

Life is what you make it – and the same could be said of the festive season. Whether you prefer to be low-key and spontaneous or are all about planning an extravaganza, we hope the pages ahead will inspire you. From colossal trifles to branches heavy with baubles, eco crackers to posh Christmas hampers, veggie feasts to pretty giftwrap, it's all here. Just don't forget the tree.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

'Tis the
SEASON...

FOR A RUSTIC CELEBRATION, COMBINE NATURAL ELEMENTS WITH LOTS OF HOMESPUN CHARM



WORDS JAMES CUNNINGHAM
SHOPPING DAISY BENDALL
PHOTOGRAPHY WARREN HEATH/BUREAUX/LIVING INSIDE
STYLING SHELLEY STREET/BUREAUX/LIVING INSIDE

GLASS BOTTLE, from £34.50, Nkuku

CUTLERY, £180 for 24 pieces, Heal's

TEALIGHT HOLDER, £12, Rowen & Wren

SERVING BOWL, £42, Att Pynta

CRYSTAL WINE GLASSES, £79 for 6, The Vintage List

LINEN BLEND NAPKINS, £19 for 2, Arket

CANDLESTICK, £60 for 3, Layered Lounge

NAPKIN RING, £3.95, Graham & Green

PLATES, from £20, Maison Margaux

DISH, £24, Kana London

OAK BOARD, £40, The White Company

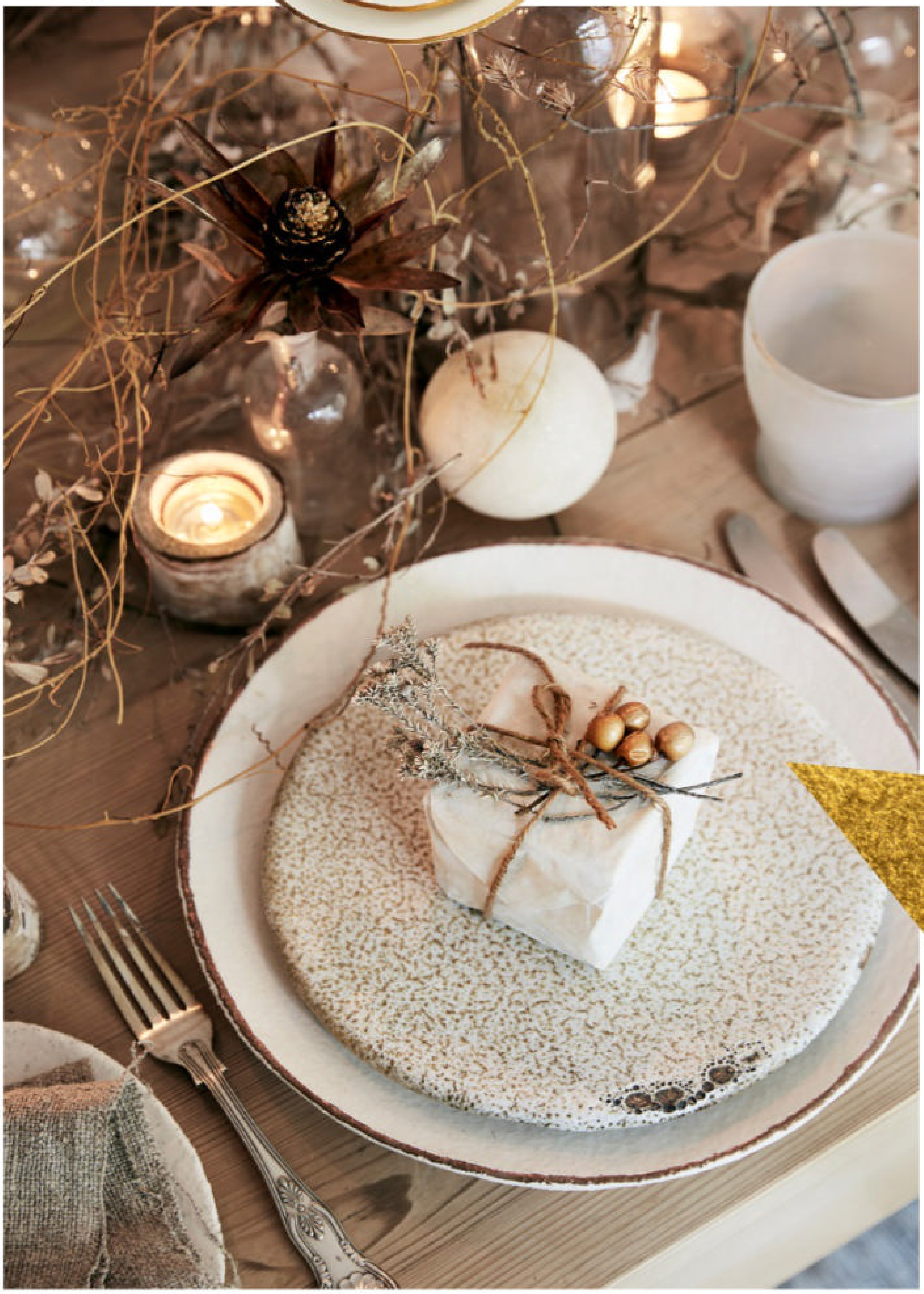
BUNDLE OF BIRCH TWIGS, £3.99, Daisyshop

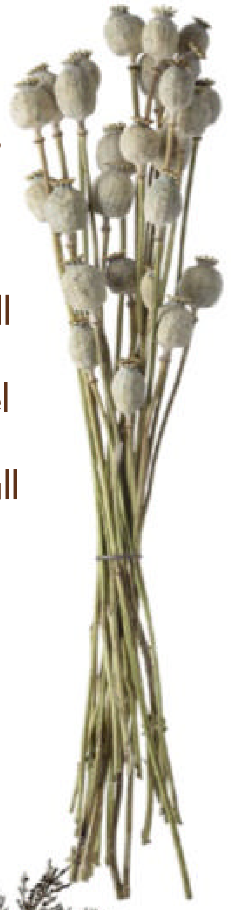
GARLAND, £25, La Redoute

FAUX STEMS, £25, Pad Lifestyle

ALL IS BRIGHT

At the dining table, take nature as your inspiration. Instead of a floral centrepiece, forage for branches and fallen leaves and display them artfully in individual pots and bud vases – if you don't have a woodland on your doorstep, Daisyshop's collection of grass stems and dried flowers is an easy alternative. Casual tabletops tend to feel all the more inviting, so keep the look relaxed by eschewing a tablecloth – this will allow the natural grain of the table's wood to shine through, too. At each place setting, rough-edged linen napkins, glazed plates and mismatched vintage cutlery will set a charming tone. Try the collection of handmade ceramics and textiles at Rowen & Wren for pieces that fit the look.





BUNCH OF DRIED POPPY HEADS, £10, Hudson Home

COMFORT AND JOY

In the sitting room, sofas and armchairs laden with heavy throws and generous cushions will instil a relaxed sense of comfort. Consider the collections at Cox & Cox and The White Company. Shades of brown and bronze work well to warm up neutral spaces, so layer in these rustic hues to make the space feel inviting. Try your hand at making a natural wreath by using twigs and small branches. Hazel and willow vines are ideal for the base, as they're strong enough to bend into shape without snapping. You'll need a sharp pair of scissors to cut each branch to size and then some twine or wire to bind the individual stems together. Alternatively, try the ready-made rustic designs at Rose & Grey or Neptune. In other corners of the room, create simple but charming vignettes. Hang dried orange slices from a few simple branches in a vase or make a display with a pine cone garland.

WREATH, £40, The White Company

WREATH, £65, Rose & Grey

TEALIGHT HOLDER, £25, The White Company

BRASS WREATH, £42.50, Nkuku

PINE SPRAY, £18, Amara

MISTLETOE DECORATION, £48, The Danes

WREATH, £39, Neptune

METAL WREATH, £18.50, RE-found Objects

GARLAND, £36.50, Nkuku

FERN SPRAY, £15.50 for 3, Cox & Cox

‘TRY MAKING A NATURAL WREATH WITH TWIGS AND SMALL BRANCHES’

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS, £8.99 for 6, H&M Home

BAMBOO ORNAMENT, £6 for 3, Att Pynta

MISTLETOE DECORATION, £8, House Doctor at Nordic Nest

GIFT WRAPPING SET, £18, Coffee & Cloth

RIBBON, from £5, Nancy & Betty

DROP DECORATION, £15 for 3, Layered Lounge

STAR DECORATION, £5, RE-found Objects

VELVET BAUBLE, £19.50, Nordic Nest

RUSTIC CANDLE, from £5, Fenwick

PINE CONES, £4.49 for 3, The Danes

GLASS BAUBLE, £7, Hudson Home

GOLD BERRY PICK, £2, Hobbycraft

BRASS BELL, £30 for 2, Layered Lounge

DECK THE HALLS

Whether you have a green fir tree or a more minimal display with an oversized foraged branch, baubles are a must for the festive season. RE-found Objects and Layered Lounge have quality decorations that fit the rustic look, and for other festive flourishes inspired by the natural world, try the collections at online retailer The Danes. Stacks of presents, casually arranged in corners and on surfaces, will become a decoration in themselves. For a simple but magical look, wrap them up in recycled paper and finish by tying sprigs of berries or dried flowers to them with hessian string. Hobbycraft has good options for wrap and gift accessories. Candlelight imbues any room of the house with a sense of enchantment – a display of simple pillars will catch the eye without being overly elaborate. Group them in odd numbers and mix up the heights and widths for visual interest.

JUNGLE PLAY TENT
£25

Argos | Sainsbury's | habitat.co.uk

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LION
CUSHION
£12
Freddie's
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habitat

Feast
to eat
Vitello tonnato
Sam's Focaccia
Lemon roast Chicken
Winter Panzanella
Carrots + Ricotta
Lobster Rolls
Tiramisu
fennel + almond biscotti
to drink
Hot spiced Cider
Winter Sangria

PHOTOGRAPHY LAURA EDWARDS

STYLING AMY NEASON

Share THE JOY

WITH SOME ITALIAN INSPIRATION FROM CHEF GIOVANNA RYAN, THIS IS A FESTIVE FEAST WITH A TWIST. FILL THE TABLE WITH DELICIOUS THINGS MEANT FOR SHARING, HAND EVERYONE A PLATE AND TELL THEM TO TUCK IN

RECIPES GIOVANNA RYAN

Vitello tonnato

Containing both fish and meat, this antipasto from Italy's Piedmont region sounds bizarre to many, but it's one of the most addictive dishes I know and I've converted many naysayers.

SERVES 10 as a starter
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes, plus cooling and chilling
COOKING TIME about 30 minutes

- **800g rose veal fillet, topside or rump**
- **Rocket leaves, to garnish**
- **10-12 pickled/marinated anchovy fillets (the silvery ones you find in the deli section, not the salty preserved ones in tins and jars)**

FOR THE TUNA SAUCE

- **400g good-quality jarred or tinned tuna in olive oil, drained**
- **3 large egg yolks***
- **5-6 pickled/marinated anchovy fillets**
- **2tbsp capers, drained**
- **200ml rapeseed oil**
- **100ml good-quality olive oil, plus extra to drizzle**
- **Juice 1 lemon (or more), to taste**

1 Preheat oven to 190°C (170°C fan) mark 5 and take the veal out of the fridge so it reaches room temperature. Pat veal dry, then season generously. Wrap tightly in foil and roast for around 30min. The cooking time can vary significantly – look for a bit of give when you squeeze the meat, and for it to be blush-pink in the centre. If in doubt, ask your butcher for timings for your cut of meat.

2 Remove from oven, unwrap and cover loosely with foil. Leave to cool fully, then wrap in clingfilm and chill.

3 To make the tuna sauce, put all the ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth and emulsified. Taste and season if necessary. The capers and anchovies are quite salty, so be careful adding salt. Keep sauce covered in the fridge.

4 To serve, unwrap the veal and slice as thinly as possible. Spread the tuna sauce over a serving platter. Arrange the veal slices on top and scatter over a few handfuls of rocket leaves. Finish with a grind of black pepper, a drizzle of olive oil and the anchovy fillets.

*PREGNANT WOMEN, INFANTS AND THE ELDERLY ARE ADVISED TO EAT RAW EGGS ONLY IF THEY HAVE THE BRITISH LION STAMP

Sam's focaccia

My brother Sam is an excellent baker, so it's over to him for this one. Focaccia is suitably indulgent for a Christmas feast and is perfect for mopping up extra sauce.

MAKES 1 large loaf
PREPARATION TIME 25 minutes, plus rising and cooling
COOKING TIME about 40 minutes

- **450g strong white flour**
- **7g sachet fast-action dried yeast**
- **8tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to grease**
- **4 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked**
- **Flaked sea salt, to sprinkle**

1 Combine flour, yeast and 15g salt in a large mixing bowl. Add 300ml cold water and 2tbsp oil and knead briefly in the bowl, then on an oiled work surface until smooth. This will take a while, so persevere!
2 Return dough to the bowl and leave to rise for 1hr at room temperature, covered with a damp tea towel. Make sure the bowl is big enough to accommodate twice the size of the original dough.
3 Tip the dough out of the bowl and knead again, then transfer to an ovenproof dish, roughly 45cm square, pressing the dough into the corners. Cover and leave to rise again for about an hour or, alternatively, leave in the fridge overnight.
4 Preheat oven to 210°C (190°C fan) mark 6-7. Remove dough from the fridge (if left in fridge overnight). Prod with your fingertips to make dimples. Drizzle with 4tbsp oil and sprinkle over the rosemary leaves and a few pinches of sea salt.
5 Allow to rest at room temperature for another 30min, then bake for 40min or until golden brown and risen. Drizzle with the final 2tbsp oil and leave to cool. Remove from the dish as soon as the loaf is cool enough to handle.

Lobster rolls

I've included these on the menu for their decadence, which is always welcome on a party table! It's nice to lay out all the components and let people assemble their own rolls. Fresh lobsters are expensive, but you can pick them up frozen from supermarkets for relatively little.

MAKES 10 rolls
PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes, plus freezing and cooling
COOKING TIME about 20 minutes

- **2 large live or cooked lobsters (about 1kg each)**
- **10tbsp good-quality mayonnaise**
- **Finely chopped chives, to taste**
- **Juice 1 lemon (or more), to taste**
- **1tsp smoked paprika**
- **10 long brioche rolls**
- **A few leaves of butter lettuce (optional)**
- **2-3 spring onions, finely sliced, to garnish**

1 Begin by cooking the lobsters. If you've bought live ones, store them in the fridge, but put in the freezer for an hour before cooking to sedate them. When ready to cook, bring a large pan of water to a rolling boil.
2 Cook the lobsters one at a time. Remove one from the freezer, put straight into the boiling water and cover with a lid. The cooking time will vary according to size, but a 1kg lobster takes about 20min. They should be pink all the way through.
3 Once cooked, transfer the lobster to a big bowl of ice-cold water to stop the cooking. Repeat with the second lobster.
4 Once cooled, twist the head to remove it, then the claws, so you're left with just the tail. Use shellfish crackers (or a hammer if you don't have them) to break the shell and pick out all of the meat. Repeat with the big claws.
5 Cut lobster meat into bite-sized pieces and put in a bowl with the mayonnaise, chives, lemon juice and paprika and some seasoning. Taste and add more lemon juice if needed.
6 Cut the brioche rolls vertically along their length, so you can fill them from the top. Just before you're ready to serve, heat a large dry frying pan and lightly toast the inside of each roll.
7 Assemble the rolls with some lettuce leaves (if using) and a generous helping of the lobster mixture, followed by the sliced spring onion – or put the components on the table and let your guests help themselves.

Lemon roast chicken with crispy squashed potatoes and pesto

This is a one-pan, lazy version of chicken and roast potatoes. The baby potatoes and smaller chicken pieces make it more suitable for sharing, and the pesto takes it to another level. You can buy a good-quality ready-made pesto, but it won't be quite the same.

SERVES 10
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes
COOKING TIME about 1 hour

- **1kg baby potatoes, larger ones halved**
- **6 large rosemary sprigs**
- **2 whole free-range chickens, each cut into 8 pieces (skin on)**
- **3 lemons, halved**
- **2 whole heads of garlic, halved horizontally**
- **50ml olive oil**

FOR THE PESTO

- **3tbsp pine nuts**
- **1 small garlic clove**
- **50g Parmesan, freshly grated**
- **1 large bunch of basil (about 80g), leaves picked**
- **7-8tbsp olive oil**
- **Lemon juice, to taste**

1 Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Cook potatoes in a large pan of salted boiling water until tender. You want them to hold their shape but be soft enough to squash with a fork (around 10min, depending on size); drain.

2 Spread rosemary sprigs, then potatoes, over two large baking trays. Squash potatoes with a fork so they split and can absorb the chicken juices. Sprinkle with salt.

3 Arrange the chicken pieces and lemon and garlic halves on top of the potatoes, then sprinkle chicken with salt and drizzle everything liberally with the olive oil.

4 Roast for about 40min, until the chicken is cooked through and the skin is crispy. Remove chicken, lemons and garlic and cover with foil. Turn the heat up to 220°C (200°C fan) mark 7; return potatoes to the oven for 10min to crisp up.

5 While the chicken is cooking, make the pesto. Ideally, use a pestle and mortar, as a food processor will bruise the basil. Toast the pine nuts in a dry pan until lightly browned, then set aside to cool.

6 Once cooled, pound the pine nuts with the pestle and mortar along with the garlic, Parmesan, basil, a pinch of salt and 4tbsp olive oil. As the mixture starts to come together, add more olive oil until you have a relatively smooth paste that drops off a spoon. Taste and add more salt and a squeeze of lemon juice, if you like.

7 Serve the potatoes and chicken piled up on a large plate, drizzled with the pesto, with the roasted lemon halves for squeezing and the garlic for people to squeeze out the bulb halves, if they like.

Honey roast carrots with ricotta and crispy sage

These caramelised carrots are so easy to prepare and look wonderful. The sage browns very quickly, so keep an eye on it.

SERVES 10 as a side
PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes
COOKING TIME about 20 minutes

- **20 baby carrots, mixed varieties if possible, or larger carrots cut into shorter lengths**
- **2tbsp runny honey**
- **3tbsp butter**
- **300ml vegetable or sunflower oil, to fry**
- **Small bunch sage, leaves picked**
- **500g ricotta**

1 Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Arrange carrots on a large baking tray. Use 2 if the tray looks overcrowded – you don't want them touching each other. Drizzle with honey and dot over the butter. Season liberally with salt and roast for about 20min, shaking and turning occasionally. Keep an eye on them as the sugar in the honey can catch easily.
2 Meanwhile, heat the oil in a small pan until shimmering but not smoking. Drop in the sage leaves and fry until crisp but not browned. Remove with a slotted spoon; drain on kitchen paper.
3 Spread ricotta over a large serving plate and put the roasted carrots on top. Scatter over the sage leaves and season with freshly ground black pepper.

Winter panzanella

Traditionally, panzanella is a Tuscan bread and tomato salad, created as a way of using up stale loaves. Tomatoes are out of season at this time of year, so I've given it a winter update with seasonal ingredients. It's a pretty robust salad, so it can withstand sitting out on a table for a little while.

SERVES 10 as a side
PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes, plus cooling
COOKING TIME about 1 hour

- **3-4 medium beetroots, mixed colours if possible**
- **3 medium red onions, cut into wedges**
- **Olive oil, to drizzle**
- **1 large ciabatta loaf, ideally a few days old**
- **Small head of red radicchio**
- **Mixed salad leaves (beetroot and rocket leaves work well, but include some milder leaves too)**
- **2 fennel bulbs, sliced very thinly**
- **Large handful flat-leaf parsley, leaves only**
- **8tbsp hazelnut or walnut oil (olive oil will do if you don't have either of these)**
- **4tbsp red wine vinegar**
- **40g Parmesan**

1 Preheat oven to 190°C (170°C fan) mark 5. Peel the beetroots, cut into wedges and put on a baking tray with the red onions. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and roast for about 45min, until the beetroots are soft and the onions slightly caramelised. Beetroot can be stubborn to cook, so if the onions look like they're done earlier, take them out and set aside to avoid burning. Leave to cool.
2 Turn oven up to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Tear the ciabatta into smallish pieces and put on a baking tray. Drizzle liberally with oil and sprinkle with salt. Roast for about 15min, until crisp and golden.
3 Tear the radicchio into rough pieces and put in a large mixing bowl with the other salad leaves, fennel, beetroots, onions and parsley leaves. Mix the hazelnut or walnut oil with the vinegar; season.
4 When you're ready to serve, dress the salad with the vinaigrette and toss in the ciabatta croutons. Use a vegetable peeler to shave Parmesan over the top to finish.

Tiramisu

This Italian dessert is often thought to be traditional, but in fact it was invented about 50 years ago. This doesn't make it any less delicious and it's a spectacular end to a party. I suggest you serve this in a large glass bowl for maximum drama.

SERVES 10 with plenty of leftovers
PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes, plus chilling

- **6 eggs, separated***
- **120g caster sugar**
- **450g mascarpone**
- **300ml double cream**
- **200ml Marsala**
- **200ml Grand Marnier**
- **200ml freshly made, very strong coffee, cooled**
- **About 25-35 sponge fingers**
- **Cocoa powder, to dust**

1 Whisk egg whites until stiff, then set aside. In a separate bowl, whisk egg yolks with the sugar for 3min until they're paler and expanded in volume. Mix in the mascarpone, making sure there are no lumps.

2 In a third bowl, whisk the double cream until relatively stiff, but still light. Fold into the mascarpone mixture. Gently fold in the egg whites with a large metal spoon, trying to avoid knocking out any air.

3 Stir the Marsala and Grand Marnier into the coffee and pour into a shallow dish. Soak a third of the sponge fingers in the mixture for about 30sec, then arrange in the bottom of a large glass bowl. Dust with cocoa, then spoon on a third of the mascarpone mixture. Repeat layering twice, then cover the bowl.

4 Chill for at least 6hr to set. Dust with more cocoa powder to serve.

Hot spiced cider

This is the perfect drink to enjoy sitting around an open fire, and makes a good alternative to mulled wine. If you want it sweeter, you could add a couple of tablespoons of sugar or honey.

SERVES 10
PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes, plus infusing
COOKING TIME about 10 minutes

- **2 litres good-quality apple cider**
- **Zest 1 orange, cut into strips, plus extra orange slices to garnish, if you like**
- **2 apples, cored and thinly sliced**
- **8 cloves**
- **7-8cm piece fresh root ginger, sliced**
- **A few whole star anise**
- **4 cinnamon sticks**
- **A few slugs of cognac or brandy, if you like**
- **Sugar or honey, to taste**

1 Combine everything except the brandy or cognac and sugar or honey in a large pan. Cover and slowly bring to the boil; leave to simmer and infuse for at least 30min.

2 Remove from heat; add a few slugs of cognac/brandy, sugar or honey to taste and extra orange slices, if you wish. Serve immediately.

*PREGNANT WOMEN, INFANTS AND THE ELDERLY ARE ADVISED TO EAT RAW EGGS ONLY IF THEY HAVE THE BRITISH LION STAMP

Slow and steady wins the taste
Charlie Bigham's
LASAGNE
Charlie Bigham's
LASAGNE
for 2

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Charlie Bigham's
Obsession is my secret ingredient

Fennel biscotti

These little Italian biscuits are perfect with coffee at the end of a meal. You could also wrap them and give as gifts.

MAKES 30
PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes, plus cooling
COOKING TIME about 1hr 5 minutes

- **150g skin-on almonds**
- **1tbsp fennel seeds**
- **250g plain flour, plus extra to dust**
- **250g caster sugar**
- **Finely grated zest 1 lemon**
- **1tsp baking powder**
- **2 eggs**

1 Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Spread almonds on a baking tray and roast for about 5min, until just starting to colour. Tip on to a chopping board, allow to cool a bit, then roughly chop.
2 Pound the fennel seeds with a pestle and mortar until broken up but not powdered. Mix with flour, sugar, lemon zest, baking powder and a pinch of salt in a large mixing bowl. Lightly beat eggs, then add to mixture. Bring together into a dough.
3 Line a baking tray with baking paper. Dust a work surface lightly with flour; divide dough into 2. Roll each piece into a sausage shape around 7cm in diameter, then place on a lined baking tray, spacing apart. Press to flatten slightly.
4 Bake for about 20min – they should be golden and starting to crisp, but still soft in the middle.
5 Reduce oven temperature to 160°C (140°C fan) mark 3. Move the 'sausages' to a chopping board and leave to cool slightly. Cut each into 1½cm-thick slices. Return slices to baking tray and bake for 20min on each side until golden. Cool, then store in an airtight container.

Winter sangria

Serve this sangria in a big jug with lots of ice. The mulling syrup is made beforehand, and there's more here than you'll need, so you can either keep it for yourself or give it away in little bottles as gifts.

SERVES 10
PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes, plus cooling
COOKING TIME about 40 minutes

FOR THE MULLING SYRUP
- **250g caster sugar**
- **2 oranges, quartered**
- **Zest 1 lemon**
- **6 whole cloves**
- **6 cardamom pods, bruised**
- **6 allspice berries**
- **2 cinnamon sticks**
- **Small piece fresh root ginger, sliced**
- **1 vanilla pod, halved lengthways**

FOR THE SANGRIA
- **2 bottles red wine**
- **500ml ginger ale**
- **4 clementines, sliced**
- **2 lemons, sliced**

1 Put all the ingredients for the mulling syrup in a large pan with 800ml cold water. Cover and bring to the boil, then reduce to a low simmer for about 30min, stirring occasionally.
2 Strain mixture through a fine sieve, then decant into sterilised bottles to store. Leave to cool completely before sealing.
3 To serve, combine 200ml mulling syrup with all the sangria ingredients in a large jug with plenty of ice.

Charlie is always fishing for compliments

Charlie Bigham's
FISH PIE
Charlie Bigham's
FISH PIE
for 2

So he only cooks with the freshest ingredients and would never add anything else. All Charlie Bigham's dishes are cooked like you'd cook at home and leave to be delivered to your local supermarket on the same day. Yes… the same day.

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Charlie Bigham's

Obsession is my secret ingredient

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sofa exclusively at dfs

CHRISTMAS TREE
Harry, Ed and Libby decorate the tree every year, which stays up until Twelfth Night. Libby helps decorate the table with crackers in rainbow colours.

Christmas IN THE *country*

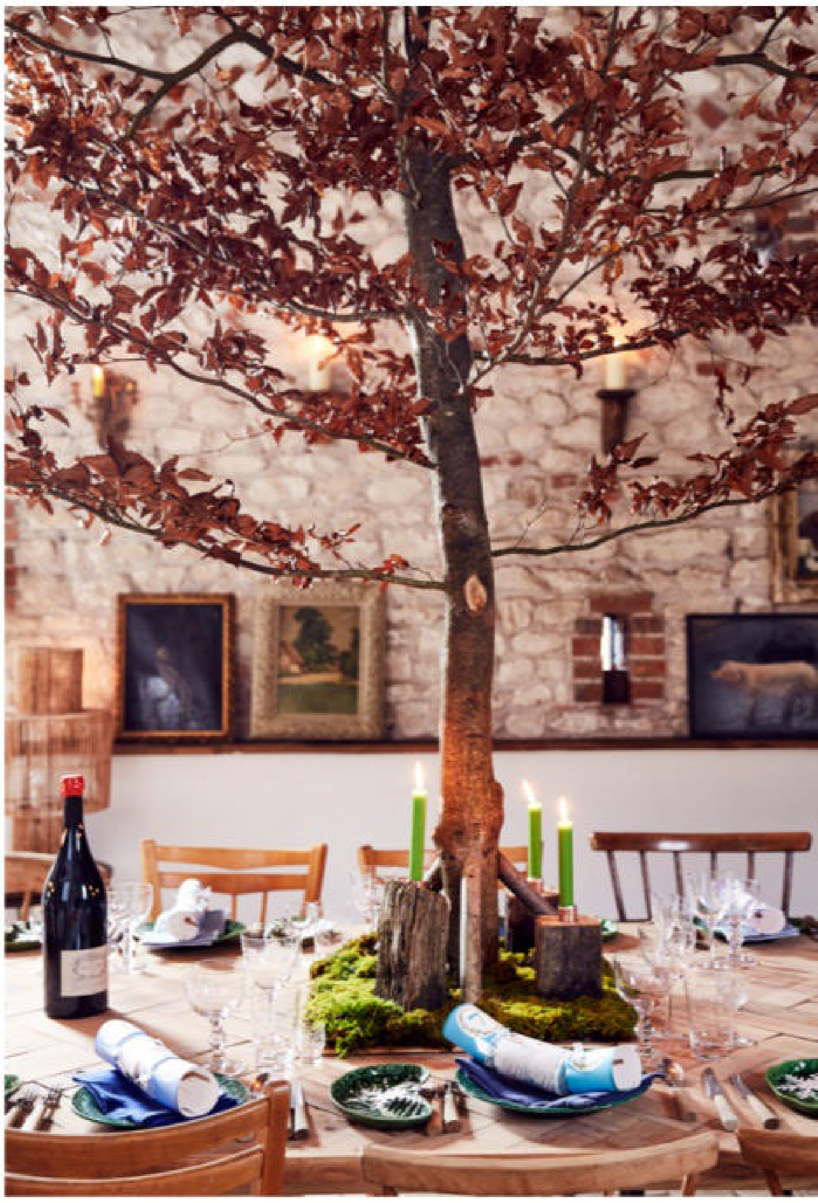
SARAH MOORE RELISHED THE CHALLENGE OF RESTORING THE FARMHOUSE WHERE SHE NOW LOVES TO CELEBRATE THE FESTIVE SEASON

WORDS RUTH CHANDLER PHOTOGRAPHY ALUN CALLENDER
PRODUCTION BEN KENDRICK STYLING SARAH MOORE

HOME CV

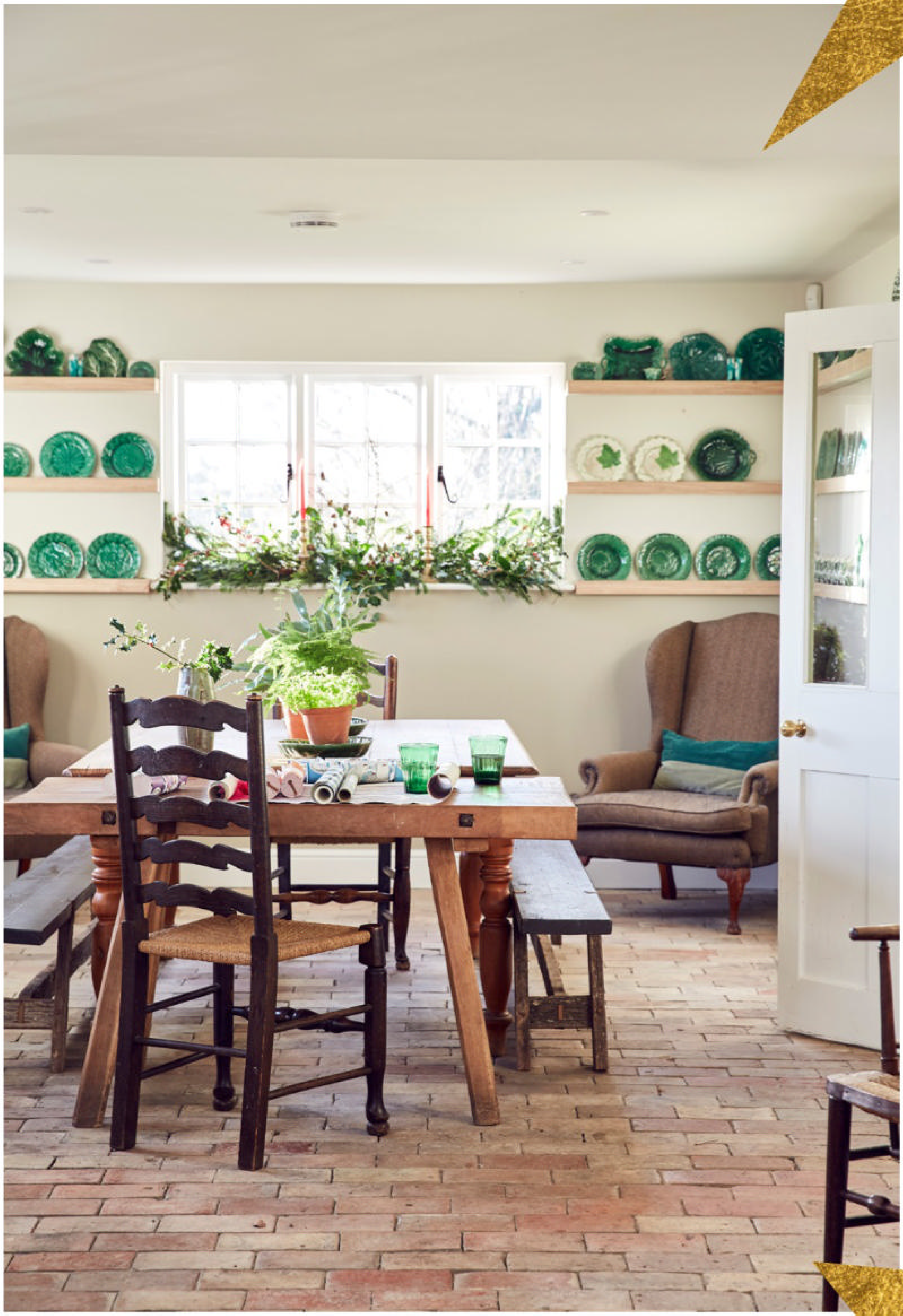
WHO Sarah Moore lives here with her husband, Pete, and their teenage children, Harry, Ed and Libby. 'We came to view this house six years ago,' says designer and TV presenter Sarah. 'I said to Pete, "It has three bedrooms, it's nearly derelict and it's in the middle of nowhere." And he replied, "Yes, but let's buy it now!"' Sarah has written craft books, created practical projects for magazines and has presented BBC One's *Money For Nothing* – upcycling and selling unloved treasures, which she says 'satisfies my urge to hoard'. **WHAT** This 17th-century farmhouse stands in the West Sussex hamlet of Hooksway in the South Downs, between Petersfield and Chichester. Originally three 'one-up, one-down' cottages, the white, peg-tiled house and its outbuildings are set in 30 acres of land. **RENOVATION** The renovation was a huge challenge. 'It had a hole in the roof and one in the bathroom ceiling. We had a week to work on it while the children stayed with their grandparents. We stripped out every carpet, every curtain, all the kitchen units, and Pete mended the ceiling with cardboard and filler.' The family and their new black Labrador, Bramble, lived in it as it was for four years, then rented a neighbouring farmhouse while specialist listed-building firm Kerley Builders and architect project manager Tom Freeborough took on the renovation. Each roof, floor and window was replaced. They enlarged the kitchen and, to add a fourth bedroom, created a mezzanine level in the barn and linked the two structures. When it came to decorating, Sarah was full of ideas drawn from her professional experience. She wanted to balance the rustic and rich with the clean and fresh. It owes much to the ghosts of properties past. 'We never invested in any of our houses until this one. I wanted a lovely robust country style here where everything works.'

Follow Sarah on Instagram @sarahmoorehome. Money For Nothing is on BBC One and BBC Two at various times.



DINING TABLE

On the table is a copper beech 'tree', which Sarah created with the help of local shepherd's hut-maker Paul Pinnington (@paul.pinnington) and stylist Ian Pearce. 'We collected some small branches from our beech trees before the leaves dropped,' Sarah says. 'Then we drilled holes in a bigger one into which we poked the smaller branches.'



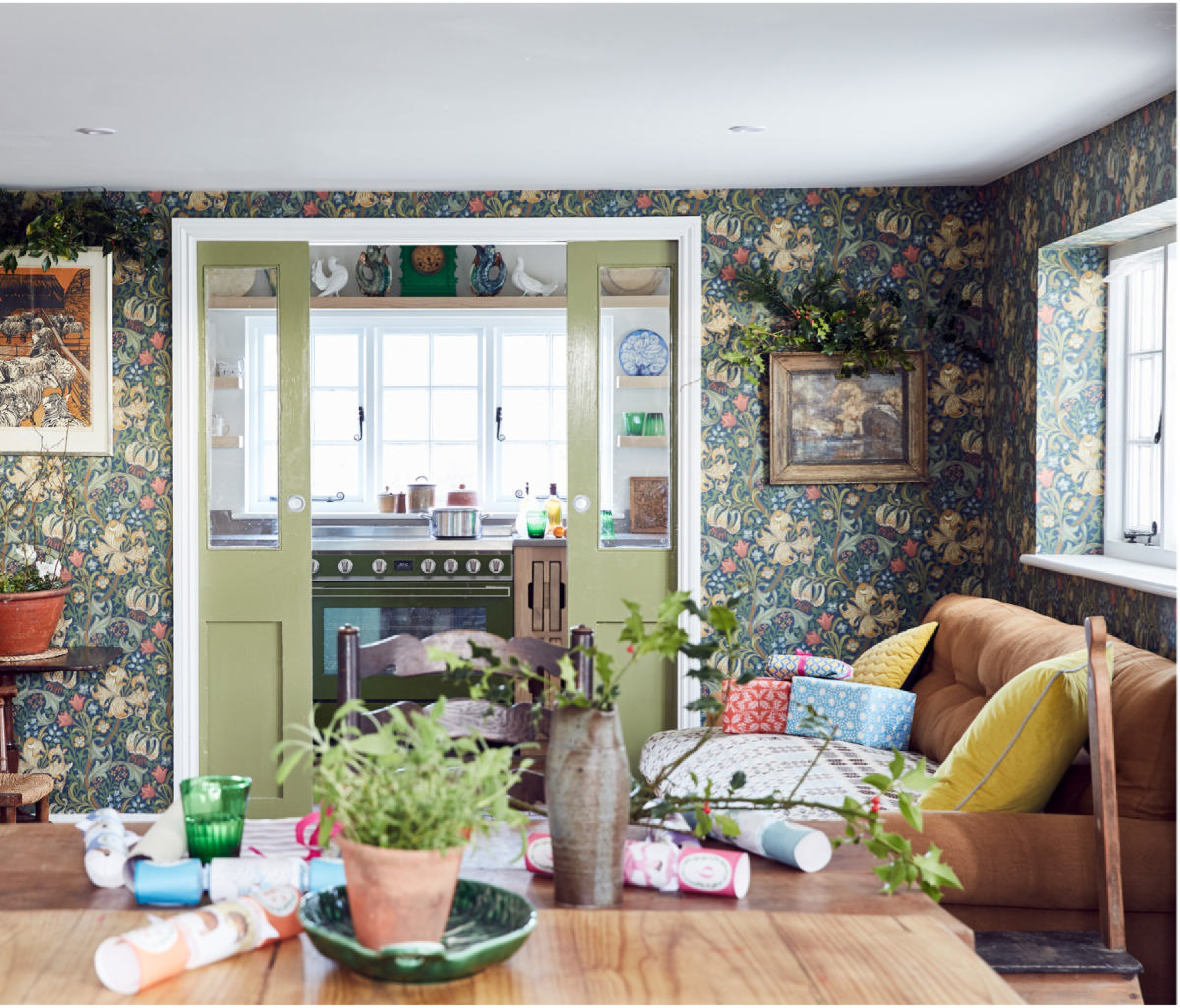
DINING AREA

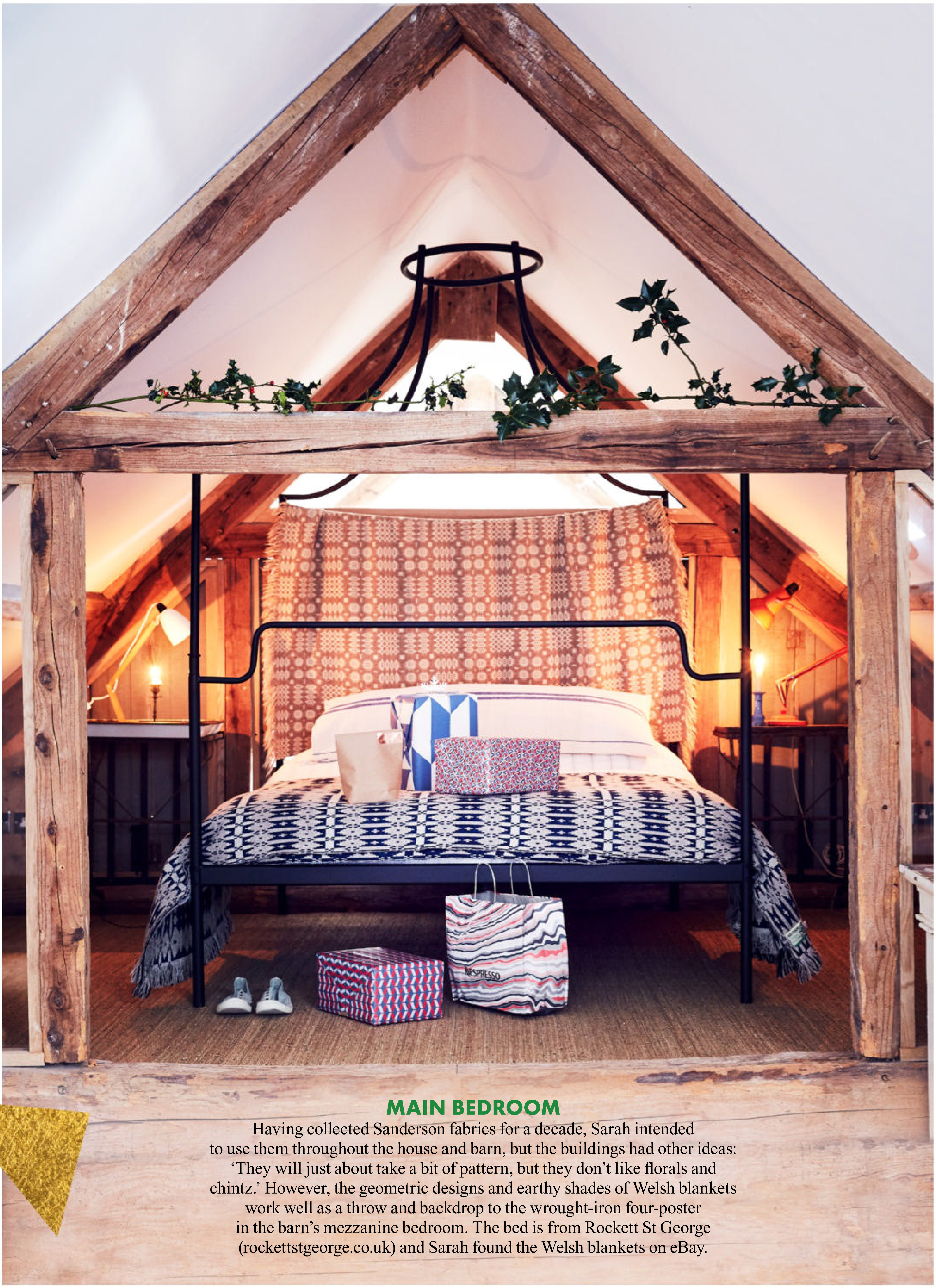
Sarah wanted to thread natural themes through the interior design. 'I love flowers and bringing the outside in, so there is a lot of green.' At the table end of the room, Little Greene's Portland Stone provides a mellow backdrop for Sarah's collection of cabbage ware – some inherited from her grandparents, some unearthed in charity shops. And she isn't precious about these pieces. 'The crescent-shaped ones are particularly nice. I thought, there's no point in having them stuck in a cupboard. We use them for parties, then put them in the dishwasher.'

The room is full of rustic texture: chunky contemporary furniture, finer antique pieces and reclaimed floorbricks alongside the display. The wingback armchairs (above) help soften the look and came from Sarah's *Money For Nothing* former co-presenter, furniture restorer Jay Blades.

SITTING AREA

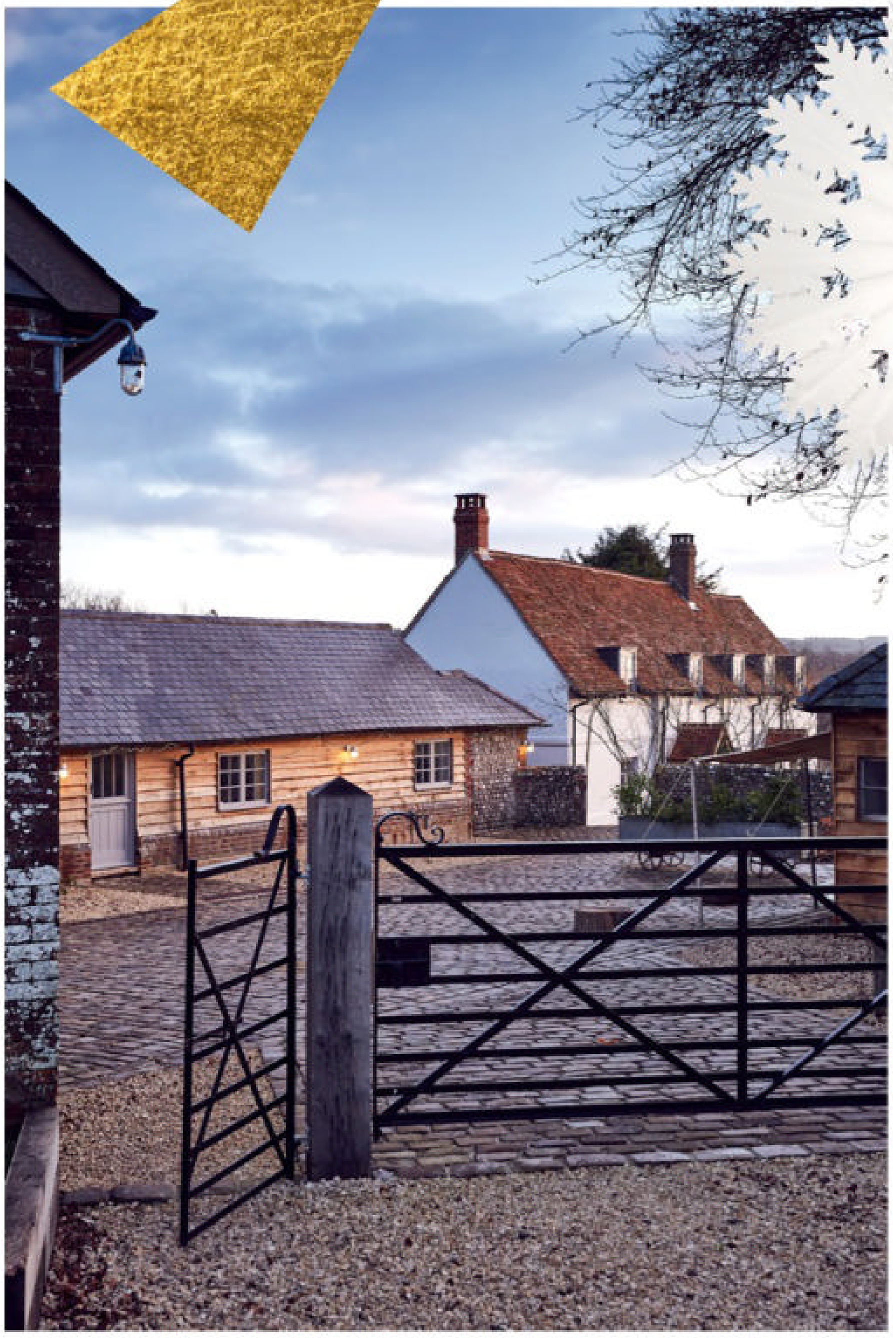
Sarah chose William Morris's Golden Lily wallpaper in the sitting area, setting off a pair of rush and sisal Sussex armchairs. On the Georgian side table (below left) is an original Conran Maclamp (she found both on eBay). Beyond the pocket doors is the kitchen, where the plain oak units came from Neptune. The doors can be shut so the teenagers are free to cook while Pete uses the rest of the room as an office, but it can be opened up to make one sociable space.





MAIN BEDROOM

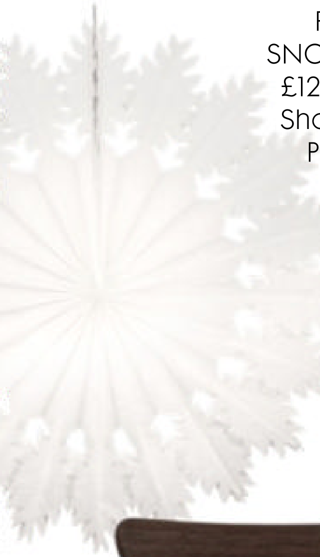
Having collected Sanderson fabrics for a decade, Sarah intended to use them throughout the house and barn, but the buildings had other ideas: 'They will just about take a bit of pattern, but they don't like florals and chintz.' However, the geometric designs and earthy shades of Welsh blankets work well as a throw and backdrop to the wrought-iron four-poster in the barn's mezzanine bedroom. The bed is from Rockett St George (rockettstgeorge.co.uk) and Sarah found the Welsh blankets on eBay.



EXTERIOR
The smart cobbled courtyard was created by the builders with reclaimed Yorkstone, finished with a large wrought-iron gate, which came from Scott's Furniture in Margate (scottsmargate.co.uk).

Get the LOOK

TAKE INSPIRATION FROM SARAH'S INTERIORS



PAPER SNOWFLAKE, £12.50, The Shop Floor Project

THROW, from £169, Melin Tregwynt

CANDLES, £15 FOR 6, British Colour Standard

DINING CHAIR, £325, Neptune

CANDLESTICK, £22.50, Nkuku

DESK LAMP, £50, Garden Trading

PLATES, £60 for 2, MatchesFashion

PLACEMATS, £128 for 4, The Colombia Collective

CUSHION, £55, Designers Guild

GLASS, £8.58, Made in Design

BOWL, £43, Nordic Nest

BED, £950, Rockett St George

GET THE LOOK COMPILED BY: DAISY BENDALL.

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RECIPES AND PHOTOGRAPHY
EDD KIMBER

Chocolate-dipped honeycomb

Honeycomb is one of the easiest things to make in the kitchen and it has the advantage of feeling like a fun science experiment. Sugar is cooked until caramelised and hot, then bicarbonate of soda and cream of tartar are very quickly whisked in, causing it to erupt and foam up. Poured into a tin and left to set, you are rewarded with a bittersweet honeycomb candy, which, once dipped in chocolate, becomes utterly irresistible.

MAKES ABOUT 25-30 CHUNKS

- **Oil, to grease**
- **4tsp bicarbonate of soda**
- **½tsp cream of tartar**
- **80ml golden syrup**
- **300g caster sugar**
- **300g dark chocolate, melted**

1 Lightly grease a 23 x 33cm baking tin and line with a large single sheet of baking parchment that stands slightly above all the sides. Set close to your hob.
2 Weigh out all your ingredients before you start because this recipe happens so quickly that you won't have time to do any prep once the sugar is cooked to the right temperature.
3 Put the bicarbonate of soda and cream of tartar in a small bowl and stir to combine.
4 Scrape the syrup into a large pan and pour in the sugar. Place over medium heat, stirring occasionally with a heatproof spatula, until the mixture is smooth and the sugar has completely dissolved. Continue heating until the mixture is a rich caramel colour and reaches 149°C on an instant-read or jam thermometer.
5 Remove the pan from the heat and, using a metal whisk, very briefly mix in the bicarbonate mixture. This action needs to be quick but without leaving lumps. Overwhisking at this point will deflate the honeycomb.
6 Pour the honeycomb into your prepared tin and watch as it grows and expands. Set aside for a few hours or until fully set.
7 Put a large sheet of baking parchment on a work surface. Put the melted chocolate in a small bowl. Break the honeycomb into chunks, dip them into the chocolate, then place on the baking parchment until set. Stored in an airtight container, the honeycomb should keep for about a week.

Chocolate honey nut baklava

The combination of crisp pastry, chocolate and nuts all soaked in a honey syrup is a wonderful concoction. While I have kept things simple, making the baklava with any variety of nuts (a mix of almonds and pistachios being my favourite), cocoa powder and filo, you can also add spices to introduce another layer of flavour – cinnamon and cardamom being the two I would opt for. This deliciously decadent treat just cries out for a strong Turkish coffee on the side.

MAKES ABOUT 50 SMALL PIECES

- **16 sheets of filo pastry**
- **150g unsalted butter, melted**
- **300g nuts, whatever type or mixture you prefer, plus extra for serving**
- **3tbsp cocoa powder**
- **¼tsp fine sea salt**
- **240ml runny honey**

1 Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Unroll the sheets of filo and cut them to the same size as the base of a 23 x 33cm baking tin. Cover with a damp cloth to prevent them from drying out.
2 Brush the inside of the baking tin with a little of the melted butter and put a sheet of filo in it. Brush with butter and repeat this layering process until you have 8 layers of pastry, finishing with a buttered layer.
3 Put the nuts in a food processor and pulse until they are finely chopped but not powdery. Add the cocoa and salt and pulse once or twice to combine. Tip the nuts over the pastry and spread evenly. Repeat the butter and filo layering until all the pastry has been used. If you have any melted butter left, pour it over the finished baklava.
4 Use a sharp knife to cut the baklava into 50 square- or diamond-shaped pieces. Bake for about 30min, or until golden.
5 Meanwhile, pour the honey and 240ml water in a pan over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. Continue heating for about 5min, or until reduced by a third. Pour into a jug and set aside. To give another flavour to the finished syrup, I often add a few slices of lemon and leave them to infuse while the baklava bakes.
6 When the baklava is ready, remove from the oven and slowly pour over the syrup until it has all been absorbed. Set aside to cool completely. To serve, sprinkle with a few extra chopped nuts. If stored in a sealed container, the baklava will keep for about 3-5 days, although the crispness will be lost the longer it sits.

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- 225g vegan butter alternative, plus extra to grease
- 200g light brown soft sugar
- 150g caster sugar
- 2 vegan 'eggs', see below
- 2 heaped tbsp white miso paste
- 1tsp vanilla extract
- 300g plain flour
- 100g wholemeal rye flour
- ½tsp fine sea salt
- ¾tsp bicarbonate of soda
- ¾tsp baking powder
- 300g milk or dark vegan chocolate, roughly chopped
- Sea salt flakes, for sprinkling

Vegan miso and rye chocolate-chip cookie bars

Miso might not be a traditional cookie ingredient, but once you've tried it, you'll understand my love for these bars. The miso gives a subtle savoury flavour – an almost buttery note – to the dough and helps make the cookies a sweet and salty delight. The rye flour also helps to create an undeniably delectable cookie. This makes wonderful individual cookies, too. Simply chill the dough as above, then divide it into 60g pieces and roll them into balls. Bake on lined baking trays for about 16min.

MAKES 12-15

1 Lightly grease a 23 x 33cm baking tin and line with a strip of baking parchment that overhangs the long sides, securing it with metal clips.
2 Put the vegan butter alternative and sugars in a large bowl and beat with an electric mixer for about 5min, until light and fluffy. Add the vegan 'eggs' and mix until fully combined. Add the miso and vanilla and mix briefly to combine.
3 In a separate bowl, whisk together the flours, salt, bicarbonate of soda and baking powder. Add this dry mixture to the butter mixture and beat on a low speed, just until the flour is incorporated. Add the chocolate and mix briefly until evenly distributed.
4 Scrape the dough into the prepared tin and spread into an even layer. Refrigerate for at least 2hr before baking, although if you can wait, the dough will only improve by resting for a day. This helps the flour to hydrate, giving a better texture, and also improves the browning, resulting in a deeper final flavour.
5 Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan) mark 4. Sprinkle with flaked sea salt and bake for 30-35min, or until the dough is golden and the edges are puffy. Set aside to cool in the tin.
6 Use the baking parchment to carefully lift the bars from the tin, then use a fine sharp knife to cut into pieces. Stored in a sealed container, these bars will keep for 3-4 days.

TO MAKE VEGAN 'EGGS'

For 1 'egg', put 1tsp psyllium husks (or 1tbsp ground flaxseed) in a small bowl, mix in 3tbsp water and set aside until it has thickened to the slightly gloopy texture of a whisked egg.

English toffee

Although described as English, this style of toffee, made with chocolate and almonds, is actually more common in the US than the UK. Regardless of its true origins, the toffee is a favourite confection of mine and incredibly easy to make. Crisp and buttery, it's a wonderful treat, but also makes a great edible gift. Another good idea is to chop it up and add it to cookie dough.

SERVES 8

- **225g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing**
- **100g caster sugar**
- **100g light brown soft sugar**
- **¼tsp fine sea salt**
- **85g dark chocolate, roughly chopped**
- **85g toasted almonds, roughly chopped**

1 Lightly grease a 23 x 33cm baking tin and line it with a large single sheet of baking parchment that stands slightly above all the sides.
2 Place the sugars and butter in a large, heavy-based pan over medium heat and stir until the butter has melted. Add the salt and 2tbsp water and continue heating, stirring occasionally, until the mixture reaches 149°C on an instant-read or jam thermometer. Remove immediately from the heat and pour into the prepared tin. Using oven gloves, tilt the tin so that the toffee spreads over the whole base. Allow to cool for a couple of min, before sprinkling the chocolate evenly over the toffee.
3 Set aside for a few min, until the chocolate has melted, then use the back of a spoon or an offset spatula to spread it evenly over the toffee.
4 While the chocolate is still melted, sprinkle over the chopped almonds. Set aside for 2hr, until fully set.
5 Use the baking parchment to transfer the toffee to a board, then use a sharp knife to cut it into pieces. Stored in a sealed container in a dark, cool spot, the toffee will keep for at least 1 week.

Extracted from One Tin Bakes Easy (Kyle Books) by Edd Kimber

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NICE &
festive
SPICE
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100%
DARK CHOCOLATE
CREATED FOR BAKERS
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Looking for the perfect way to finish Christmas dinner? Perfect an indulgent, lightly spiced Chocolate & Salted Caramel Leaf Cake that everyone will save room for!

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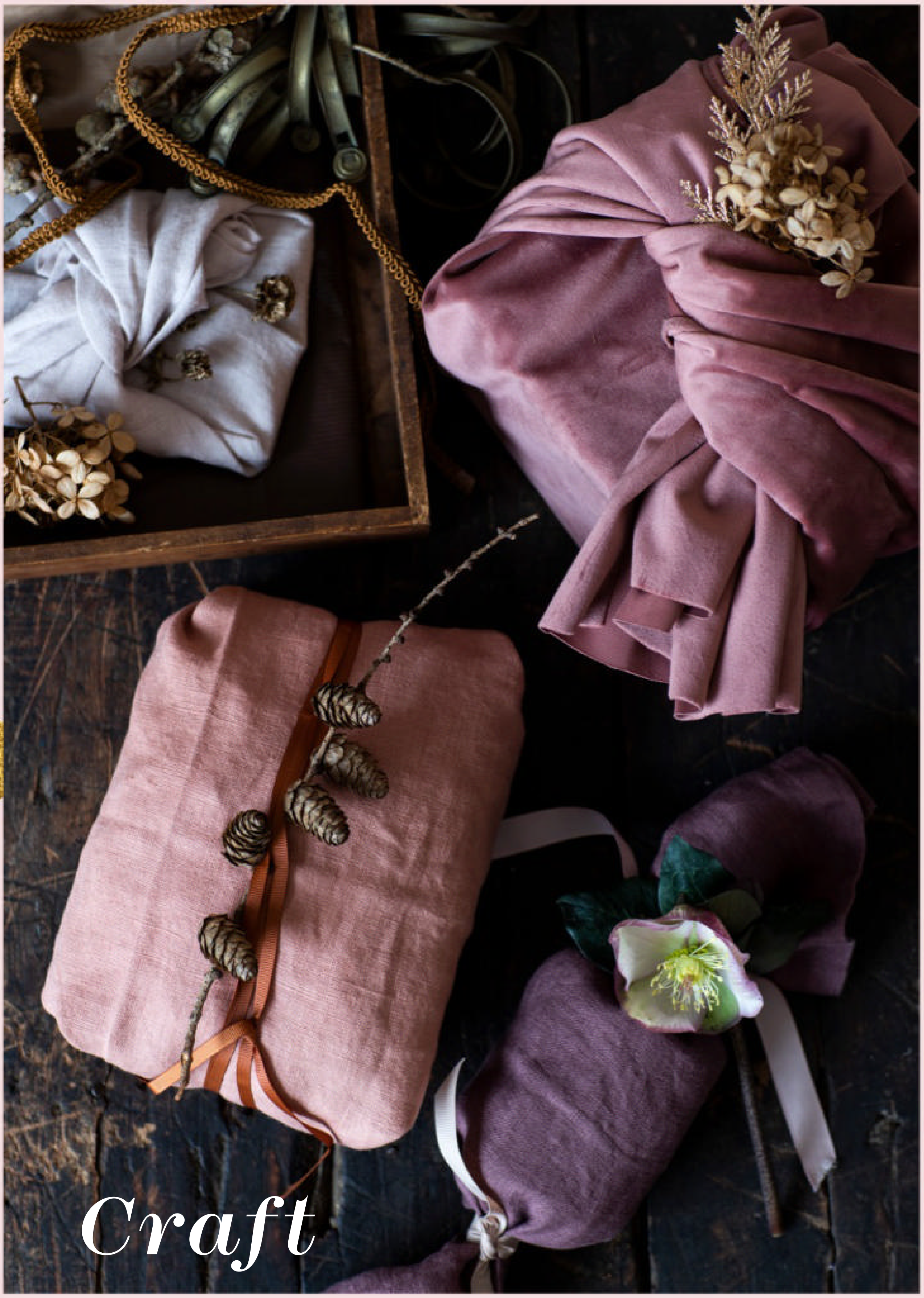


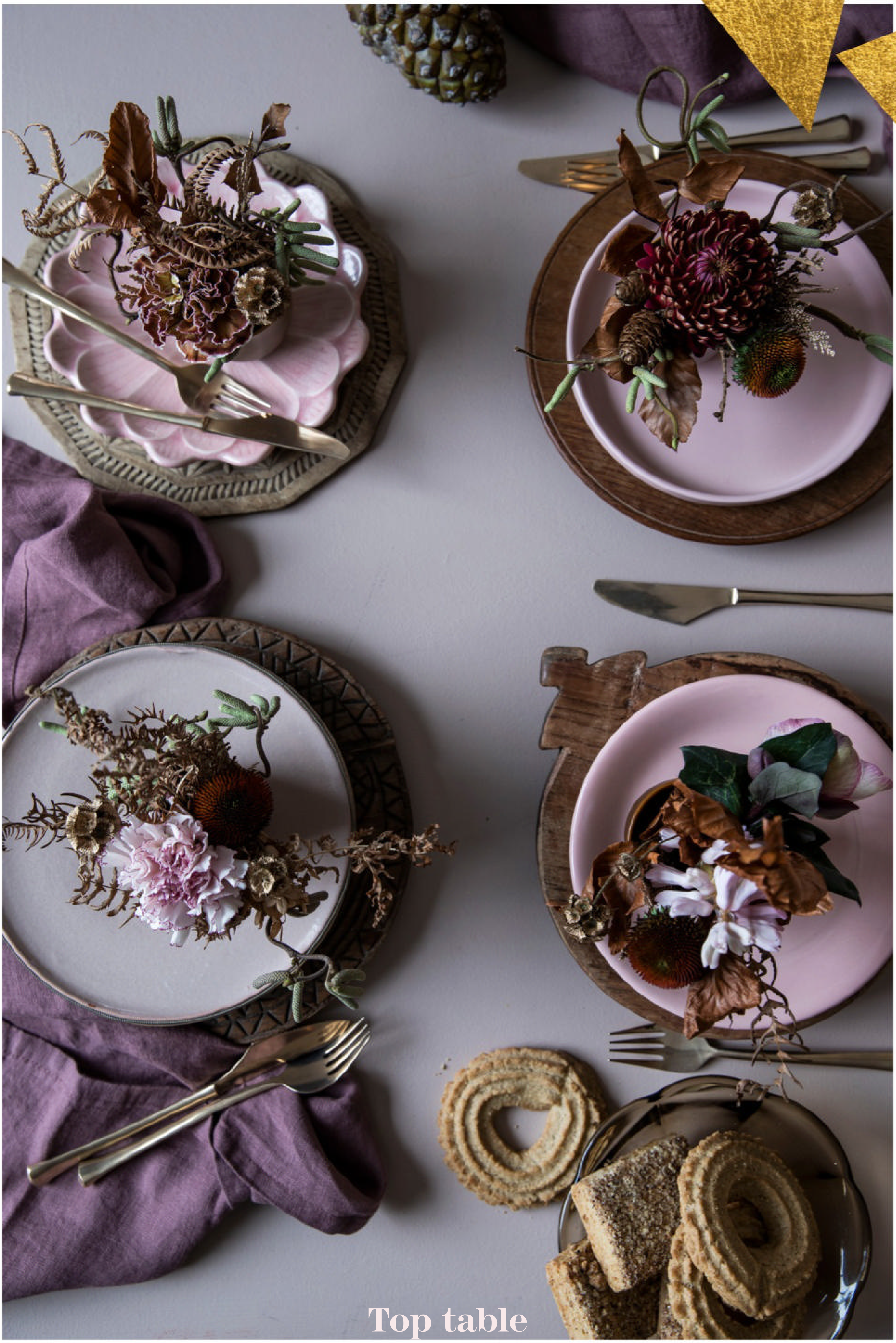
Craft WORKS

FLEX YOUR CREATIVE TALENTS WITH FESTIVE IDEAS, MADE WITH LOVE

FEATURE SARAH KEADY
PHOTOGRAPHY TIA BORGSMIDT AT HOUSE OF PICTURES
STYLING BENTE HALKJAER AT HOUSE OF PICTURES

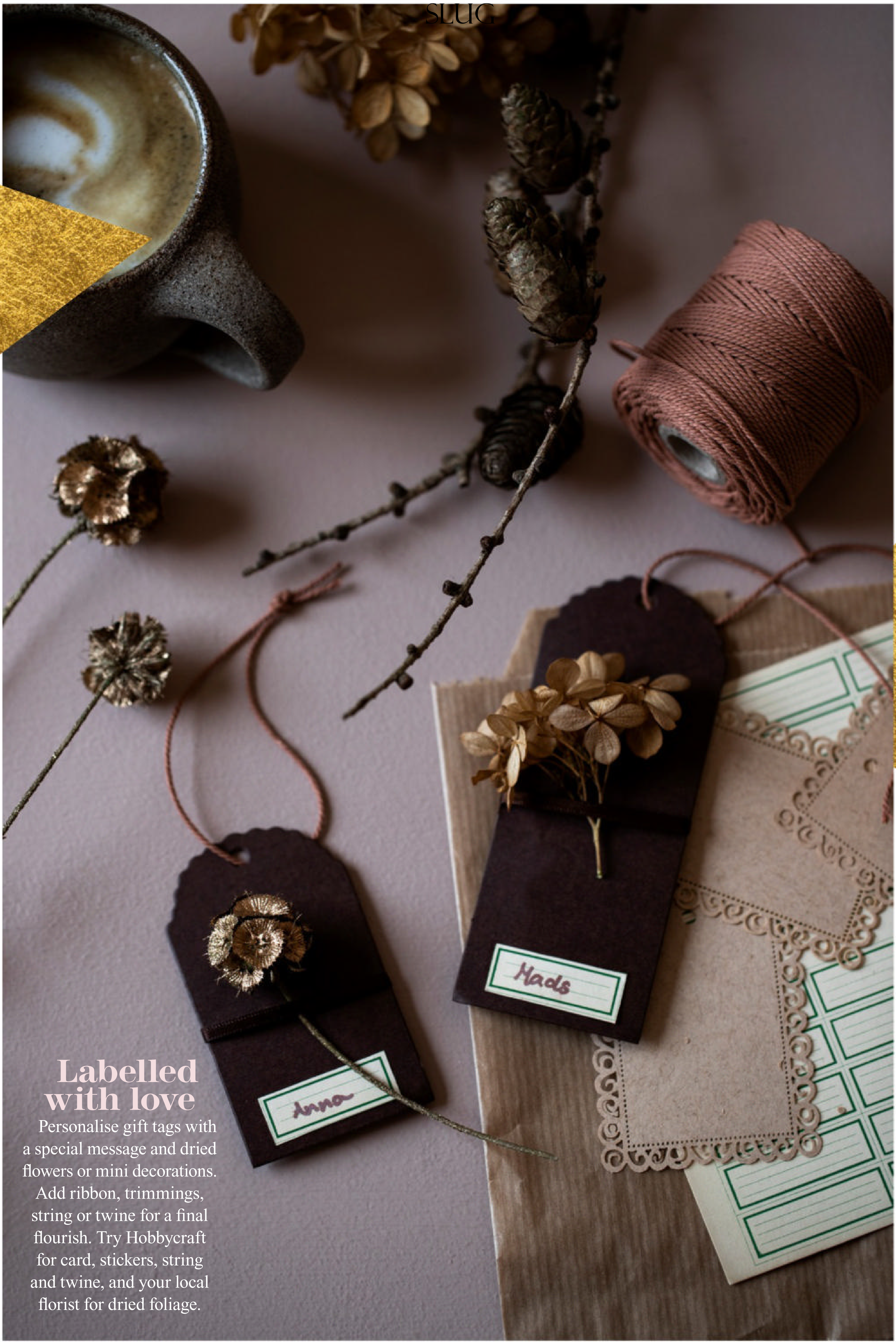
It's a wrap

Wrapping presents in fabric rather than paper is a thing this season. Not only is it better for the environment but it looks stylish, too. You can use leftover fabric, but tea towels or silk scarfs can work equally well, and can double as an extra gift. Mine your local haberdashers for fabric and ribbon, and pick up flowers and foliage at your local market or florist.



Top table

Creating small bouquets for each place setting looks simple but smart. The arrangements can be different – you can use a mixture of chrysanthemums, carnations, ferns and fresh sunflower seedheads from a florist or supermarket. Keep the table design simple, with crumpled linen, mismatched crockery and loosely arranged cutlery. For elegant stoneware plates, try Dunelm, or snap up those with a scalloped edge at Divertimenti and Etsy. Vinterior Vintage and Etsy can be good sources for metal and wooden plates and cutlery. For linen tablecloths, try Notonthehighstreet and Bombinate.



Labelled with love

Personalise gift tags with a special message and dried flowers or mini decorations. Add ribbon, trimmings, string or twine for a final flourish. Try Hobbycraft for card, stickers, string and twine, and your local florist for dried foliage.

Take me home

Gather a pretty posy of fresh and dried blooms in a mini vase or pot for your guests to take away at the end of the festivities. For mini vases, try Next and Nordic House.

Sweetness and light

Add some Christmas cosiness as the nights draw in with a flickering pillar candle* and go one step further by making a wreath to surround it. Use hydrangeas and thuja twigs – spray them in a metallic colour to match your scheme. Coloured pillar candles give a warming glow; try Broste Copenhagen for candles and Notonthehighstreet for candle holders.

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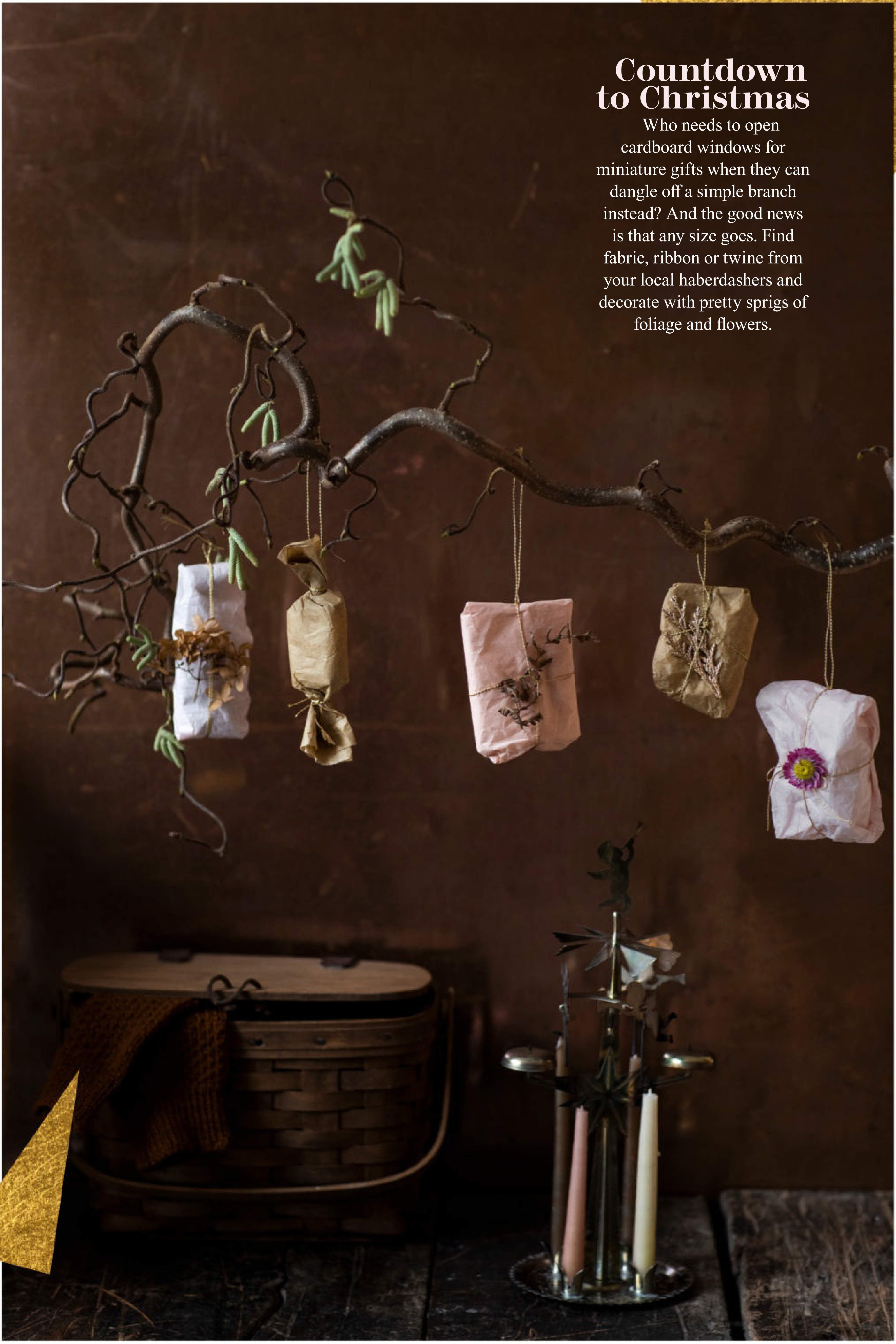
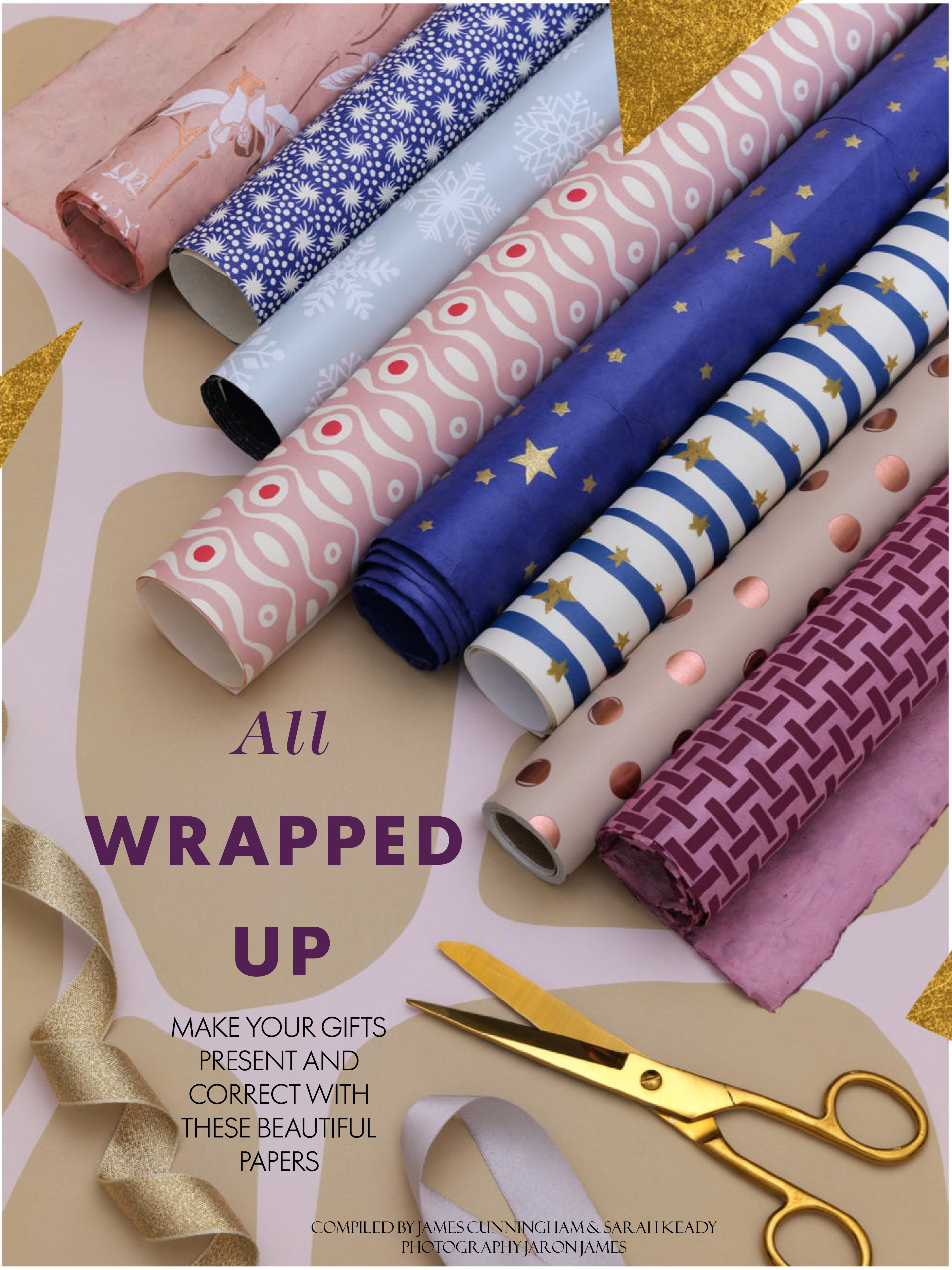
*NEVER LEAVE A LIT CANDLE UNATTENDED



Countdown to Christmas

Who needs to open cardboard windows for miniature gifts when they can dangle off a simple branch instead? And the good news is that any size goes. Find fabric, ribbon or twine from your local haberdashers and decorate with pretty sprigs of foliage and flowers.



All WRAPPED UP

MAKE YOUR GIFTS PRESENT AND CORRECT WITH THESE BEAUTIFUL PAPERS

COMPILED BY JAMES CUNNINGHAM & SARAH KEADY
PHOTOGRAPHY JARON JAMES

GIFT WRAP, from top: Folk in Blush Snowdrop, £3 a sheet, Rowen & Wren; Animalcules in Twilight, £2.50 a sheet, Cambridge Imprint; Alpine Snowflakes, £13.50 for a 10m roll, Cox & Cox; Persephone in Pink and Raspberry, £2.50 a sheet, Cambridge Imprint; Star print, £3.60 a sheet, Happywrap; Stars at Dusk, £8 for 3 sheets, Curlicue at Wearth; Spotty, £1.50 a roll, George Home; Folk in Mulberry Weave, £3 a sheet, Rowen & Wren. BACKDROP PAPER: Giraffe wrap, £5 for 2 sheets, Katie Leamon. RIBBON, from a selection, Paperchase. SCISSORS, stylist's own

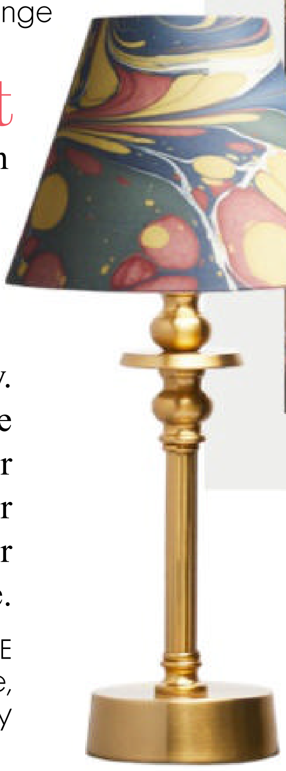
ON MY WISH LIST… *The* LIVING *influencer*

RED INTERIORS EDITOR JAMES CUNNINGHAM ON THE GIFTS HE'D LIKE TO SEE UNDER HIS TREE

GOOD ON PAPER

I'd love to be gifted a box of these elegant decorations from online retailer Layered Lounge. They'd look as good hanging on the tree as they would fastened to ribbon as a pretty finishing touch on the presents underneath.

DECORATIONS, £20 for 3; VINTAGE TRAY, £65, both Layered Lounge



A new light

Marrying design with technology, the Phileas is a clever cordless lamp that casts a warm glow in places where lighting could otherwise be fiddly. I'd love one in the centre of the dining table, for example, or to have a pair and display them at either end of the mantelpiece.

PHILEAS RECHARGEABLE TABLE LAMP, £98 without shade, Matthew Williamson at Pooky

DRINK UP

Distilled in small batches and mulled with citrus and cinnamon, this gin is a real treat. Serve it up with ginger ale (instead of tonic water), lots of ice and finish with a mandarin peel twist.

MARTIN MILLER'S WINTERFUL GIN, £27.99 for 700ml, Waitrose & Partners

GREEN PEACE

I'd be delighted to add to my house-plant collection over the festive season. This pine plant comes into its own during the holidays, especially festooned with fairy lights, but works well in humid conditions year-round.

HOUSE PLANT, from a selection, Dobbies

BETWEEN THE LINES

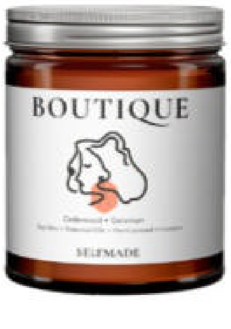
The mother-and-son duo behind 510 Laundry have a shared love of vintage textiles. It's their cushions that draw my eye – I love the striped design in the red colourway, as it reminds me of a candy cane.

CUSHIONS, £35 each, 510 Laundry

SOFTLY DOES IT

A cashmere blanket is the ultimate cosy indulgence and the perfect winter warmer. This tartan check would be most welcome in my house.

CASHMERE BLANKET, £500, The Tartan Blanket Co



Make scents

Made with eco-conscious and vegan-friendly ingredients, Selfmade's hand-poured candles would make a lovely stocking gift. The labels have seeds embedded into them, meaning they can be planted in the garden after the candle expires.

CANDLE, £25, Selfmade

Veggies REJOICE!

THIS PLANT-BASED FEAST – COURTESY OF THE McCARTNEY FAMILY – BRINGS FESTIVE FLAVOURS AND A SENSE OF OCCASION TO YOUR TABLE

PHOTOGRAPHY ISSY CROKER

Festive roast with savoury stuffing and special gravy

This roast has long been a favourite centrepiece for a Sunday lunch or festive meal in our homes. We are quite traditional, so we like to have something to carve, and this is wonderful served with the delicious gravy and some roast vegetables.

SERVES 6
PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes
COOKING TIME 1hr 15 minutes

FOR THE CRUST

- **3tbsp olive oil, plus extra to grease**
- **1tbsp garlic powder**
- **1tbsp ground flax seeds or ground almonds**
- **3 x Linda McCartney vegetarian sausages (about 150g), or others of your choice**
- **2 x Linda McCartney vegetarian burgers, or others of your choice**
- **130g Linda McCartney vegan mince, or alternative of your choice**
- **1tbsp soy sauce or tamari**

FOR THE SAVOURY STUFFING

- **4tbsp olive oil**
- **3 celery sticks, tough strings removed, finely chopped**
- **2 medium onions, peeled and finely chopped**
- **4 medium garlic cloves, peeled and crushed**
- **12 sage leaves, very finely chopped**
- **2 rosemary sprigs, leaves removed and very finely chopped**
- **400g breadcrumbs**
- **Leaves from a small bunch of flat-leafed parsley, very finely chopped**

FOR THE SPECIAL GRAVY

- **2tbsp olive oil**
- **120g mushrooms, finely chopped**
- **2tbsp red miso**
- **600ml vegetable stock**
- **1tsp garlic powder**
- **2tbsp soy sauce**

1 Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan) mark 4. Grease a 900g loaf tin with oil and line it with baking paper.

2 Put all the crust ingredients in a food processor and season well. Blitz until everything is very finely chopped and the mixture holds together when pressed firmly between your fingers.

3 Transfer the mixture to the loaf tin and firmly press it out over the base and up the full height of the sides of the tin, using your hands or the back of a spoon. Cover and refrigerate.

4 Meanwhile, for the stuffing, add the oil to a large non-stick frying pan over medium heat. Add the celery, onions and garlic and sauté for 10min, until softened but not coloured. Add the sage and rosemary and fry for another 3-5min, until you smell the aromas. Transfer mixture to a large bowl and add the breadcrumbs, 250ml warm water and parsley. Mix well and season generously to taste.

5 Tip mixture into the cavity of the crust you made earlier and smooth it out, so the crust and filling are flat and even at the top. Cook in the oven for 1hr, until browned and firm to the touch. Meanwhile, make the gravy.

6 Put the olive oil into a pan over medium heat. Add the chopped mushrooms and sauté them for 10-12min, until softened and browned. Put the miso into a bowl and mix with 2tbsp hot water to make a paste. Add to the pan of mushrooms together with the stock, garlic powder and soy sauce. Slowly bring to the boil, stirring constantly, then simmer for 5min. Pour the gravy into a blender and purée until smooth. Taste and add more soy sauce, if necessary. Pour the gravy back into the pan and reheat just before serving.

7 Remove roast from oven and leave to cool for 10min, then carefully invert the tin on to a serving dish. Serve with the special gravy and roast vegetables.

Bright Moroccan carrot salad

Carrots are a great source of vitamins C and E as well as beta carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A, and may help to protect us against heart disease and cancer as well as eye conditions, such as cataracts. The orange in this salad makes it sweet and zingy – a real flavour sensation.

SERVES 6
PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes, plus chilling

- **1 orange**
- **6 medium carrots (about 450g), peeled and coarsely grated**
- **2 spring onions, finely sliced**
- **30g walnuts, finely chopped**
- **½-1tsp dried chilli flakes, to taste**
- **3tbsp extra virgin olive oil**
- **Juice ½ lemon**
- **Small handful of flat-leafed parsley, leaves only, roughly chopped**

1 Start by segmenting the orange; a serrated knife is useful for this. First, cut off the top and bottom ends of the orange so you can set it flat on your chopping board. Working from top to bottom, slice away the peel and white pith, following the curve of the fruit. Insert the knife between one of the segments and its connective membrane and gently slice into the middle of the fruit. Then slice into the other side of the segment to release it from the membrane and lift it out. Repeat with the remaining segments.
2 Put the segments in a bowl with all the remaining ingredients and gently toss together. Season generously to taste. Cover and chill the salad for about 30min before serving.

Gingerbread cake

Gingerbread is a classic bake and this dairy-free version is wonderfully squidgy, sticky and satisfying. Served with some plant-based vanilla ice cream alternative, it makes a delightful pudding.

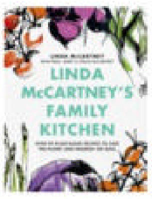
SERVES 6
PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes, plus cooling
COOKING TIME 30 minutes

- **120g non-dairy butter alternative, plus extra to grease**
- **1tbsp milled flaxseeds**
- **120g unrefined or caster sugar**
- **225g white spelt flour, plain white flour or gluten-free flour, sifted**
- **1tsp baking powder**
- **1tsp bicarbonate of soda**
- **1tsp ground cinnamon**
- **1tsp ground ginger**
- **¼tsp ground nutmeg**
- **120ml unsweetened plant-based milk alternative of your choice**
- **2tbsp blackstrap molasses or treacle**

TO SERVE

- **Maple syrup**
- **Non-dairy yogurt or cream alternative**

1 Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan) mark 4. Grease an 18cm round cake tin with non-dairy butter alternative and line with baking paper.
2 Put the flaxseeds into a bowl with 3tbsp warm water and set aside.
3 In a large bowl, cream together the non-dairy butter alternative and sugar with an electric whisk until light and fluffy. Fold in the flaxseed mixture, flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and milk alternative until smooth. Gently heat the molasses or treacle until runny, then fold into the batter.
4 Transfer the batter to the cake tin and bake for 25-30min, until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Remove and leave to cool for 10min, then turn out on to a wire rack to cool completely. Serve with a drizzle of maple syrup and non-dairy yogurt or cream.



Recipes extracted from Linda McCartney's Family Kitchen: Over 90 Plant-Based Recipes To Save The Planet And Nourish The Soul (£26, Seven Dials) by Linda, Paul, Mary and Stella McCartney, out now

DIY STYLE

Makeover your home like an interior stylist, ready for 2022

ATRO WHITE TILES, £59.92 A SQ METRE, AND FLUTE WHITE AND SAGE WALL TILES, BOTH £59.85 A SQ METRE

ATRO PINK TILES, £59.92 A SQ METRE, AND FLUTE BRIGHT SKIES™ WALL TILES, £59.85 A SQ METRE

There's so much to think about when planning an interior revamp. From colour schemes and soft furnishings to furniture and flooring, the possibilities can feel overwhelming, so take inspiration from the experts and start with a mood board (any excuse to feed that Pinterest habit).

Once you have all your ideas in one place, begin the design process by gathering together as many colour samples and fabric swatches as you can to get a feel for the textures and colours that work best with the lighting in your space.

Walls and floors will have the biggest impact on how your room looks, and when it comes to hallways, kitchens and bathrooms, tiles can tick the style and practicality boxes. Not only do they offer a crisp, chic finish but they're easy to keep clean, too. Plus, with so many sizes, colours and patterns available, you're bound to find one that's perfect for your home-decorating project.

Now there's even a way to visualise how the finished result will look, thanks to the TileMyHome online tool at Topps Tiles. This clever feature allows you to upload a snap of the room you're making over, then choose from a large range of tiles to see how each one could transform your home. You can pair different wall and floor tiles to see which shades and designs complement each other best, and you can even share your projected images with family and friends if you need a second opinion (or third, or fourth...).

Start designing your perfect space with Topps Tiles' TileMyHome visualiser at toppstiles.co.uk/tilemyhome-visualiser

HOME HELP

Embracing the latest technology means you can now makeover your home without stepping foot outside it! There are lots of helpful, time-saving options available, from Zoom decluttering courses with some of our favourite interior influencers to virtual colour-matching tools to help you find the perfect shade, and Topps Tiles' TileMyHome visualiser, which shows you how the finished result will look before you even start. Happy New Year, Happy New Home!

THE BEST...

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

Whether you want to gift to someone you love or simply fancy treating yourself, we've selected the best food hampers for you this Christmas

Red APPROVED 2021

HOW WE TESTED

Our panel tested 21 festive hampers (and all of their delicious contents) from the leading supermarkets, farm shops and small independents. They assessed each on presentation, taste, delivery experience and overall giftability to find these top picks.

BEST OVERALL CHRISTMAS HAMPER

DARTS FARM THE ULTIMATE WEST COUNTRY HAMPER

(£249, dartsfarm.co.uk)

This curated collection offers a taste of the West Country, with a huge selection of locally sourced produce, including charcuterie, cheeses, chutneys, cider and wine, plus the all-important Devonshire cream scones. Utterly delicious.

BEST FOR GIFTING

BISCUITEERS WINTER WONDERLAND HAMPER

(£150, biscuiteers.com)

The pretty packaging, plus the fact each item is freshly baked and hand-iced, gives Biscuiteers' hamper real gift appeal. Our testers loved that you could hang the ornamental biscuits from your tree, which will prove popular with kids and adults alike.

BEST BUDGET HAMPER

CARTWRIGHT & BUTLER MERRY CHRISTMAS GIFT BOX

(£80, cartwrightandbutler.co.uk)

A lovely selection to give (and receive!) this season, with sweet and savoury options to please all palates. Our testers particularly enjoyed the gingerbread fudge and are lining up the Boxing Day chutney for their turkey sandwiches.

BEST FOR TEATIME

HARRODS THE FOOD HALL FAVOURITES

(£250, harrods.com)

Who wouldn't feel spoilt finding this under the tree? Made with afternoon tea in mind, this Harrods hamper contains its bestselling treats, from Turkish delight to buttery shortbread. Our testers loved the vintage tea caddies, which can be used long after the biscuits have gone!

BEST FOR A FESTIVE BREAKFAST

MARKS & SPENCER ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST

(£100, marksandspencer.com)

This is exactly what we want to eat on Christmas morning: sourdough bagels and smoked salmon, Christmas tree crumpets topped with clementine marmalade, plus Champagne with orange juice for a Buck's Fizz or two.

EDITOR'S PICK

DAYLESFORD COLLECTION HAMPER

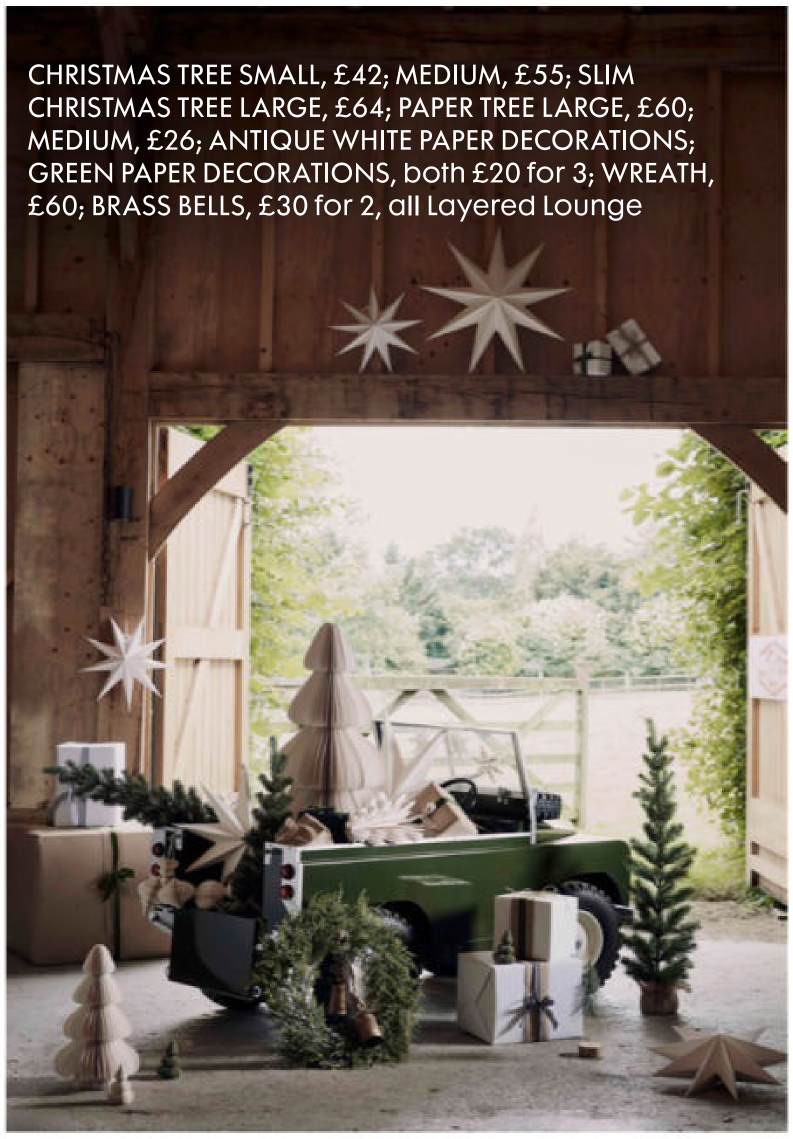
(£235, daylesford.com)

An array of the most delicious of Daylesford's organic offerings, including Penyston Brie and Bledington blue cheese, Irish smoked salmon, blinis and Prosecco. It comes delivered in a stylish wooden crate and with a cool bag for picnics.

WORDS: MILLIE WEST. TESTING: MELANIE GIANDZI, ANGELA TROFYMOVA, CALLUM BLACK. PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKFOOD

Mad ABOUT THE house

KATE WATSON-SMYTH, INTERIORS EXPERT AND *RED*'S COLUMNIST, SAYS IT'S OKAY TO WING CHRISTMAS. HERE'S HOW…



CHRISTMAS TREE SMALL, £42; MEDIUM, £55; SLIM CHRISTMAS TREE LARGE, £64; PAPER TREE LARGE, £60; MEDIUM, £26; ANTIQUE WHITE PAPER DECORATIONS; GREEN PAPER DECORATIONS, both £20 for 3; WREATH, £60; BRASS BELLS, £30 for 2, all Layered Lounge

When was the last time you were truly spontaneous? When did you wake up without a plan and do something completely unexpected? Or, better still, woke up with a plan and dumped it for something more exciting? Grown-up life tends to box us in with its schedules and rules, making it hard to find time and space to colour outside the lines. And suddenly, here we are facing Christmas again – the complete antithesis of spontaneity. (Especially after 11bn years of lockdown.)

Cast your mind back to last year, when Christmas planning reached its apotheosis. Denied family get-togethers for, by that point, about nine months, the lack of holidays and the cancellation of Halloween trick or treating meant many started planning last Christmas in October, only to be thwarted the week before, when another lockdown was imposed. Let's do it differently this time.

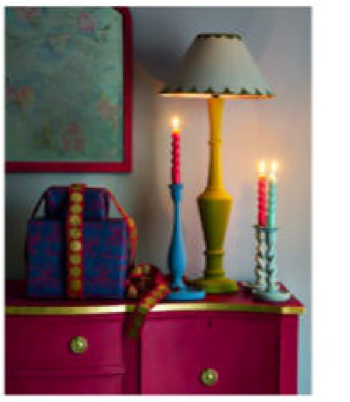
One year, we ended up driving home from France on Christmas Eve. We hadn't planned to be in the UK and we had nothing organised. Nothing. Not a tree, no sign of a turkey and no red poinsettia to be had. But we stopped at a French supermarket in Calais and stocked up with fresh baguettes for a Christmas breakfast with some organic eggs. We bought a big chicken, some French beans and tinned potatoes, not forgetting, as the Famous Five would say, lashings of red wine and chocolate.

Tumbling back through the front door as dusk fell, I remembered a wooden Christmas tree stored in the loft and it was the work of moments to decorate it. The presents were retrieved from the boot of the car and arranged around its base. And with no plans and no one aware we were back, we had a wonderful secret Christmas with no relations to squabble with, no duty phone calls or visits and only ourselves to please. It might just have been the best Christmas we've ever had.

Of course, I'm not that spontaneous – I had bought the presents beforehand, and with two children, I'm under no illusion that things might not have been so idyllic if that part of the equation had been missing.

That said, 30 years ago, I lived in Paris and would often return to the UK on Christmas Eve just before the shops shut. The adrenaline rush of running around Selfridges and trying to find the right thing for the right person coupled with the heady rush of spending money in a hurry is not an unpleasant way to spend a couple of hours.

So this year, I say, let's wing it. If you don't plan it, you can't be disappointed if it falls apart. Let's live in the moment. So what if you haven't got a huge turkey? Buy a big chicken and a pack of sausages. Grab some crackers from the local garage and a box of wine from the off-licence. This could turn out to be your best Christmas yet.



SIDEBOARD PAINTED IN CAPRI PINK; CANDLESTICKS and LAMP PAINTED IN LOUIS BLUE, GREEK BLUE AND FIRLE CHALK PAINT, all £21.95 for 1L, Annie Sloan

DESIGN TIP

Christmas is the one time of year when more really is more. Show me a sequinned Santa cushion and I'm in. Reindeer mugs? Christmas-tree bedding? Bring it on and, for one week only, enjoy all the kitsch for the festivities.

5 OF THE BEST… FINISHING TOUCHES

Keep a stash of these in your cupboard and your last-minute supper will always look planned

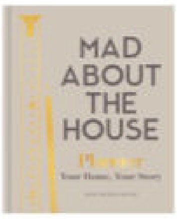
CANDLESTICK
£43.95, Liberty London

TABLECLOTH
£139, Soho Home

GLASS PLATE
£15, W A Green

PAPER NAPKINS
£6.90, Vitra

JUG
£35, Arket



Mad About The House Planner: Your Home, Your Story (Pavilion) *is out now; madaboutthehouse.com*

Some gifts are made for the here and now.
Some are made to stand the test of time.
At Neptune, we believe that the best can do both.
Good design never grows old.
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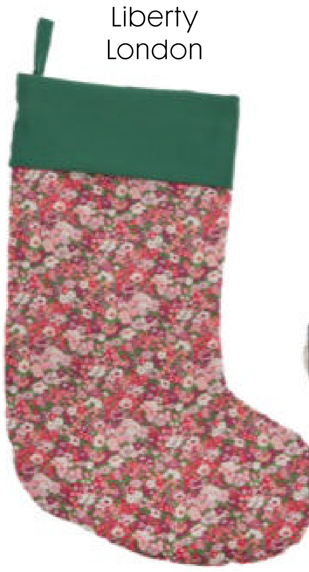
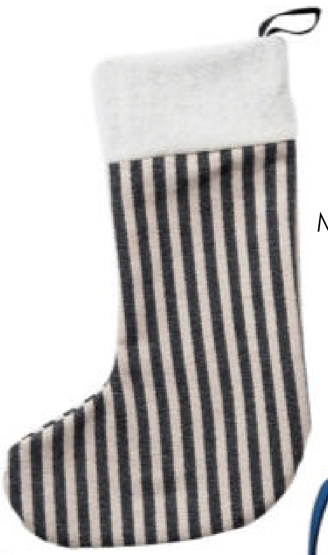
NEPTUNE
neptune.com/ochristmastree
BRONTË

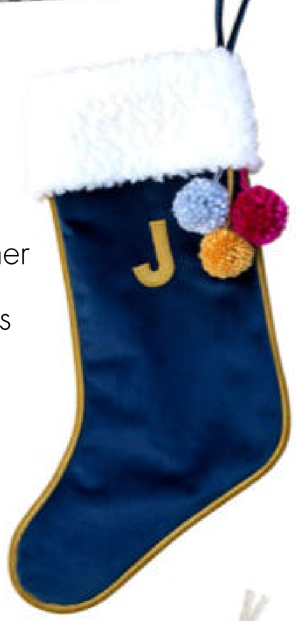
Walls painted in Piranesi Pink and Pointe Silk WALL PAINT, £49.95 for 2.5L; chest of drawers painted in Olive and Emperor's Silk CHALK PAINT, £21.95 for 1L; all Annie Sloan



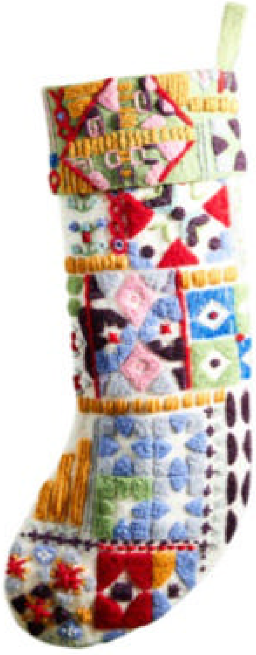
£29.95, Liberty London



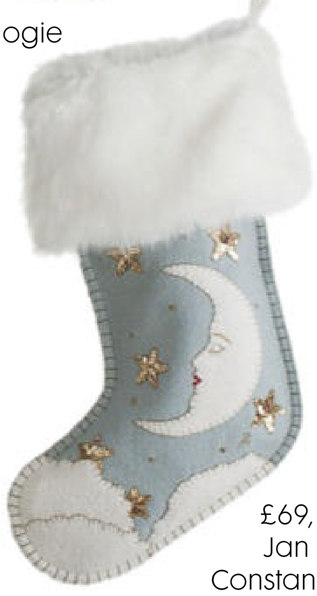
£48, Tori Murphy



£30, Esther Pallett Designs at Etsy



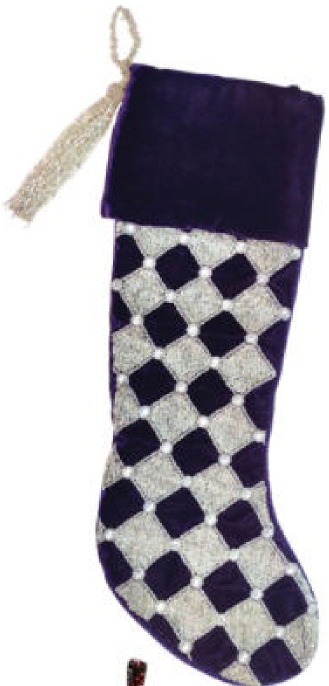
£46, Anthropologie



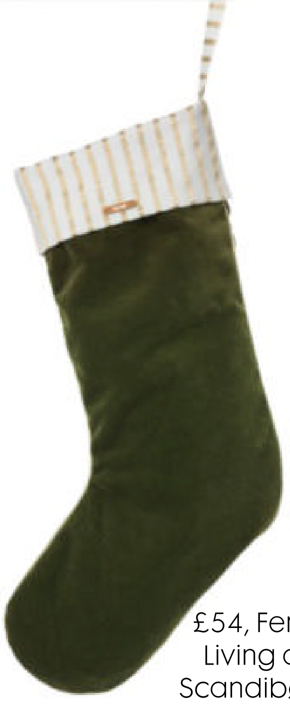
£69, Jan Constantine

Stocking UP

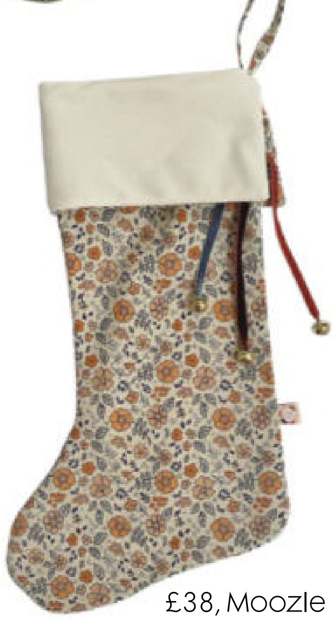
TREAT YOURSELF TO SOMETHING TO HANG FOR YEARS TO COME



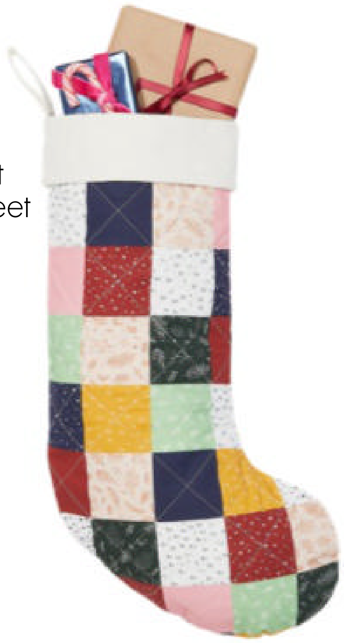
£79, Harrods



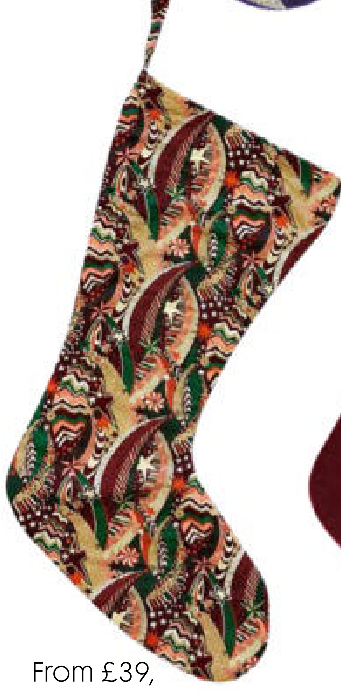
£54, Ferm Living at Scandibørn



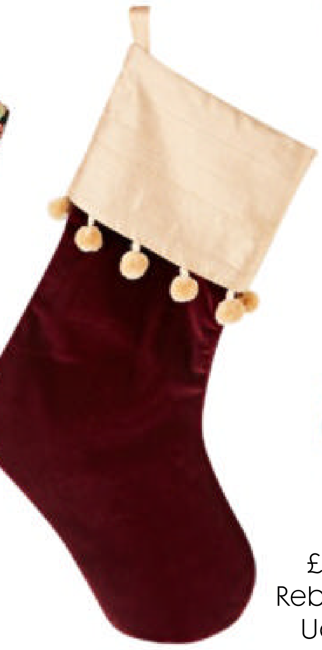
£38, Moozle at Notonthehighstreet



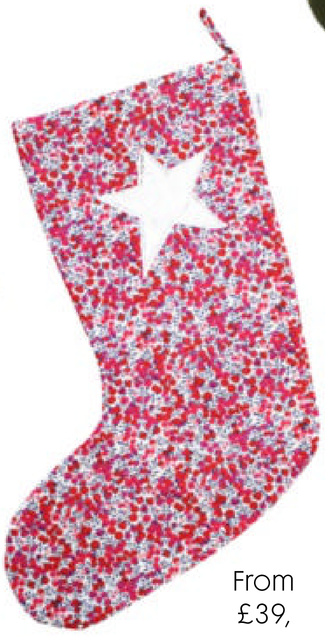
£65, Clara and Macy at Notonthehighstreet



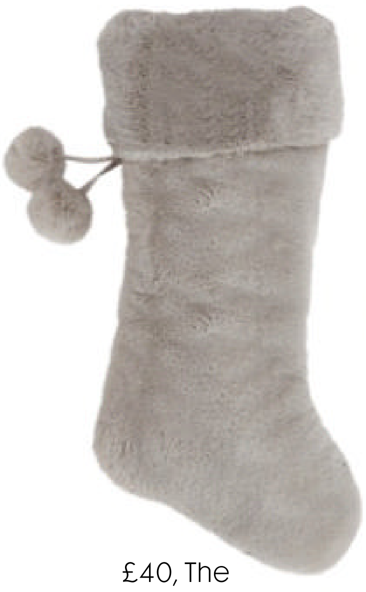
From £39, Coco & Wolf



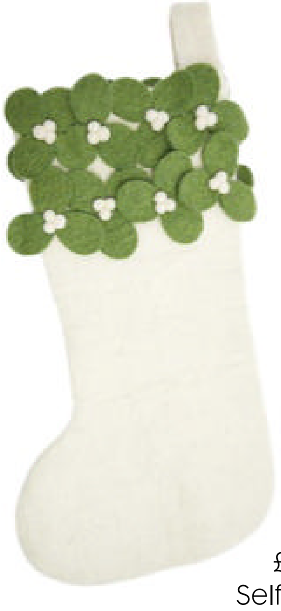
£68, Rebecca Udall



From £39, Coco & Wolf



£40, The White Company



£38, Selfridges

COMPILED BY: DAISY BENDALL

Spotlight on HAPPY CRACKERS

REBECCA SLACK, FOUNDER OF THE SUSTAINABLE CRACKER COMPANY, SHARES HER STORY

Handing her young daughter, Theodora, her first cracker last Christmas Eve, Rebecca Slack looked on as the paper parcel was torn apart in mere moments. 'I'd carefully saved the cracker for Theodora from the year before,' says Slack. 'That night, I found myself thinking about its fate and decided to fashion some leftover Liberty London material into a version that was virtually indestructible.'

Crafted to be unwrapped like a gift, the cracker was an instant hit when Slack shared the outcome on Instagram and she was soon inundated with enquiries from would-be buyers. 'Moments after reading the first message, I formed the notion for Happy Crackers in my head,' she explains.

> *'I wanted to change the way crackers are used and create new traditions'*

CROWN, £25, Fable Heart

Keen to learn more about the cracker's origins, Slack embarked tirelessly on research: 'I even spoke to past workers at Tom Smith – the birthplace of the British Christmas cracker,' she recalls. Yet she also unearthed a less joyous side to the tradition. 'I learned of the astonishing amount of waste that's generated, with 40m crackers going to landfill globally each year. I knew then that I wanted to change the way crackers are used,' explains Slack, 'to create a keepsake that reduced waste and encouraged new traditions year round.' The site launched in February with a versatile collection of all-occasion reusable crackers. 'These little parcels of happiness, normally enjoyed just once a year at Christmas, now have a place at any celebratory table,' she smiles.

CRACKERS, from £30, Happy Crackers

The designs feature carefully chosen Liberty London fabrics

Still hand-made today by Slack in North Yorkshire, each design showcases a carefully chosen Liberty London fabric whittled down from hundreds of samples. 'The prints are timeless. We want our customers to feel like they've invested in something high-quality and luxurious to be treasured and passed down. We've also introduced some metallics and velvets into our fabric range this season to work alongside the prints.'

When it comes to her favourite brands for the festive period, Slack embraces the magic of the season: 'We use letters from Polar Post to write down our goals for the year to come. And Christmas isn't complete without a fabric crown from Fable Heart. They happen to fit perfectly into our crackers – the whole family will be wearing one! For beautiful table linens, stockings and sacks, Coco & Wolf is a favourite. We'll be layering the Liberty-print linens with our designs at the table.'

TABLECLOTH, from £89; CHRISTMAS SACK, from £45, both Coco & Wolf

WORDS: ALICIA FORD

RUSTIC STYLE BY
COUNTRY LIVING
Bring a touch of farmhouse chic to your home with the new furniture and dining collections, only at Homebase
EXCLUSIVELY AT
HOMEBASE

NEW

EXCLUSIVELY AT HOMEBASE

TRELLIS DINING TABLE, £500; TRELLIS BENCHES, £250 EACH; CHECKED WOOL CUSHION, 50X50CM, £35. OTHER ACCESSORIES, FROM A SELECTION

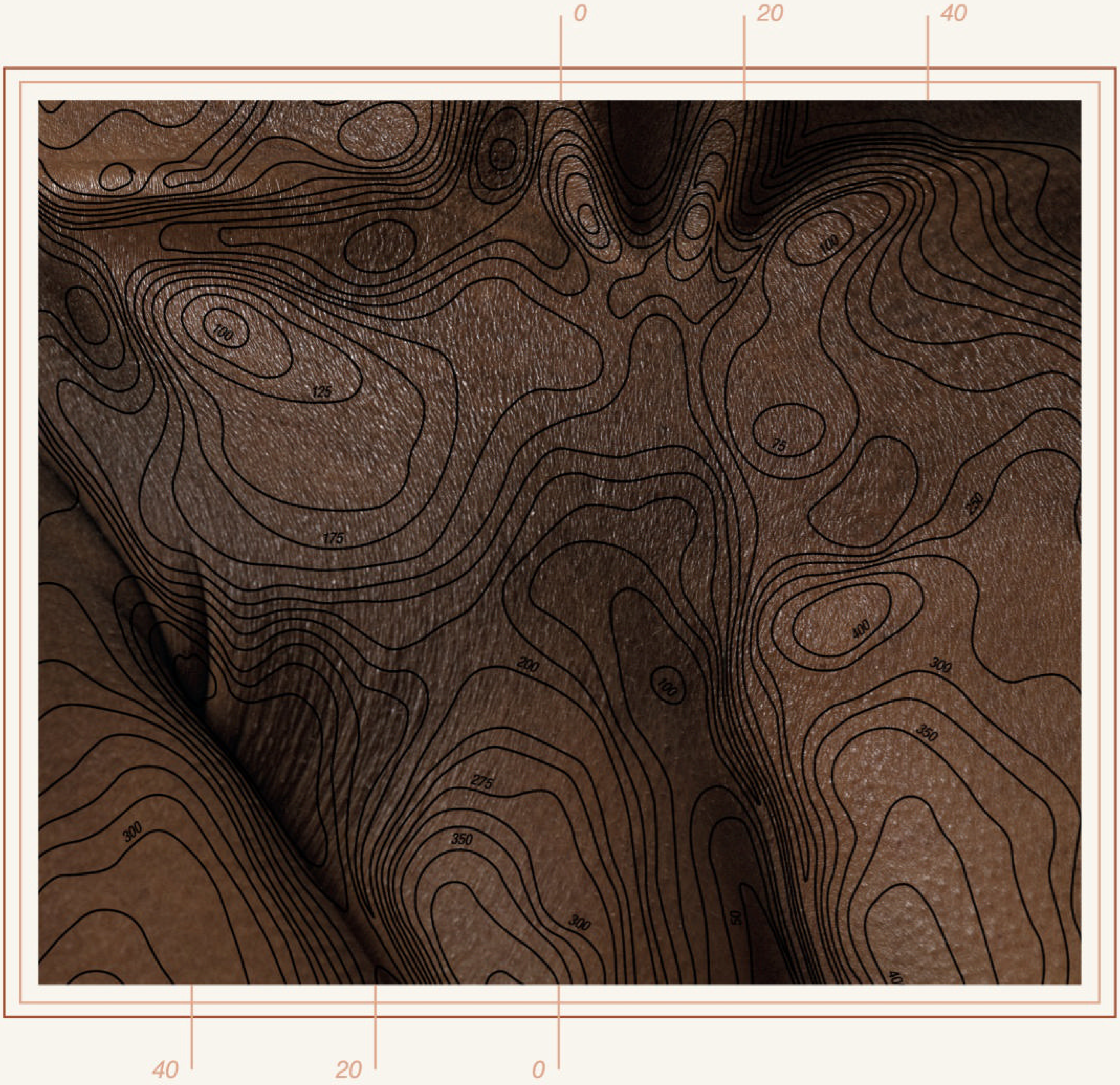
When it comes to country style, a wood-topped, farmhouse-inspired dining table with matching benches ticks all the rustic boxes. Like every piece in the *Country Living* collection at Homebase, the Kempton dining table and matching benches (left) have been created for homeowners looking for top-quality, classic designs.

Every detail of the Kempton range has been carefully considered, from the muted palette of the pale-stone painted legs that will blend with any style of decor, to the solid oak tops that have been lightly brushed and washed to bring out the natural beauty of the wood grain. Measuring an impressive 160 x 90cm, the table will seat six comfortably, and looks equally at home in the dining room or the kitchen.

The *Country Living* collection includes some fabulous tableware – crockery, cutlery, linens, napkin rings, placemats and more – all designed to reflect the natural colours and patterns of the British countryside. New to the range are the delightful ‘honeypot’ mugs (above). Fully glazed with contrasting bases and handles in three classic autumnal shades, these mugs are comfortingly chunky, durable and the perfect size for a morning cuppa!

COUNTRY LIVING COLLECTION

SHOP THE **COUNTRY LIVING COLLECTIONS** AT HOMEBASE
HOMEBASE.CO.UK/BRANDS/COUNTRY-LIVING.LIST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Breast cancer can affect any body.

Getting to know yours could save your life.

CoppaFeel!

Self
Mind Body Spirit

EDITED BY
ARIELLE TCHIPROUT

Wonder

noun:
a feeling of amazement and admiration, caused by something beautiful, remarkable or unfamiliar

Do you remember how Christmas felt when you were a child? The enchanted optimism while writing a list for Santa; the wide-eyed amazement of looking up at twinkling lights. It's sad that the festive period somehow became a never-ending to-do list of cooking and shopping. But you can regain that childlike sense of wonder, if you try. 'If you have children, watch how they interact with the world and share in their sense of awe,' says Dr Emma Hepburn, author of *A Toolkit For Happiness* (Greenfinch). But you don't need kids to mimic that feeling – as you put up your tree or listen to carols, pretend you're the child version of yourself and see Christmas through their eyes. Magical, right?

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

THE 12 SCENTS OF CHRISTMAS

Some of your favourite festive essential oils can soothe stress, improve mood and so much more, says Lynn Cardy

The festive dozen

Here are your top seasonal essential oils…

1. GINGER. The heat in festive gingerbread houses can aid digestion, warm you up and ease joints and headaches.

2. CINNAMON. Another favourite Christmas baking spice, cinnamon can also help you feel more energised and soothe aches.

3. VANILLA. The comforting smell of home and warmth. It's a brilliant de-stressor (and also makes a great hair conditioner).

4. PEPPERMINT. Not just for candy canes, peppermint is great for digestion – and it's cooling, refreshing and mind-clearing, too.

5. FRANKINCENSE. The big one for Christmas, this soothing and grounding essential oil helps if you're feeling nervous or tense.

6. MYRRH. Another Yuletide classic, this can help with winter colds and is known for its skin-rejuvenating properties.

7. ROSEMARY. Star of the stuffing and roast potatoes, the essential oil also has a mass of plus points. It boosts circulation and helps to sharpen your mind.

8. MANDARIN. Whenever we eat mandarins, the fragrance reminds us of Christmas, but their oil has a special talent all of its own: it's an instant mood-booster.

9. ORANGE. Not just a stocking filler, the essential oil helps relieve anxiety and revitalise skin. (But don't use it undiluted, as it can irritate or inflame sensitive skin.)

10. FIR BALSAM. Woody and wonderful, fir balsam is said to be relaxing and grounding – the exact feeling you have when walking through nature.

11. LEMON. The fruit may prime all those festive drinks, but the refreshing essential oil is great for lifting your mood.

12. CLOVE. Studded into oranges, cloves are another unmistakeably festive scent. Their oil is also warming and comforting – just what we need at this time of year.

GOT TO-DO-LIST BRAIN FOG?

'A few drops of this blend go a long way towards boosting mental activity and your ability to focus,' says Stephanie Tourles, author of *Stephanie Tourles's Essential Oils: A Beginner's Guide* (Storey Books):

- 20 drops each of fir balsam, peppermint and rosemary essential oils
- 60ml almond or jojoba oil (carrier)

Combine the essential oils in a dark glass bottle with a dropper stop, then add your carrier oil. Screw on the top and shake vigorously for two minutes to blend.

Apply a drop to temples, nape of neck, behind each ear or the base of your throat and breathe in deeply. Store away from heat and light, and use within one year (two years if you use jojoba oil).

TOP TIP These essential oils without the carrier oil make a great room-diffuser blend; use equal parts of each.

TRY Fir balsam, peppermint and rosemary essential oils from Absolute Aromas, from £5.50 for 10ml (absolute-aromas.com).

Seasonally stressed?

Sprinkle two or three drops of frankincense essential oil into your hand and rub between your palms. Cup your hands over your nose and breathe in deeply. Trust us, it takes the edge off any angst.

TRY Tisserand Frankincense Wild Crafted Essential Oil, £13.99 for 9ml, hollandandbarrett.com

FIGHTING A HOLIDAY COLD?

Stop it in its tracks with a steam inhalation. Myrrh can help, as it's great for clearing coughs and colds.

- Add 3-4 drops of myrrh essential oil to a basin of hot water, pop a towel over your head and breathe in the steam. Such a relief!

TRY Myrrh Essential Oil, £15 for 10ml (nealsyardremedies.com).

Lost your sexual mojo?

Making a scented oil for massage is a little like making a perfume, say the experts at Neal's Yard Remedies. It needs a base, middle and top note for the perfect blend. The top note is the first thing you smell, the middle hits next and the base note lingers. Here's one great formula:

- To 50ml of jojoba oil, add: 10 drops of sweet orange (top note), 7 of bergamot (middle) and 7 of frankincense (base) and blend.

TO USE Rub the oil between your hands and take turns giving each other a massage that features long, smooth and repetitive strokes for as long as you like.

TRY Jojoba Oil, £19 for 100ml (nealsyardremedies.com).

FEELING CHILLY AND TIRED?

Try these winter-warming cinnamon and ginger bath salts from master herbalist and author of *Herbal Goddess* (Storey Books) Amy Jirsa.

YOU WILL NEED:

250g Epsom salts, 2tbsp each powdered cinnamon and ginger, 10 drops ginger essential oil, 5 drops cinnamon essential oil.

- Combine all the ingredients in a bowl, mix and decant into a jar. Use 60ml in the bath – up to 120ml if you're really cold.

LOST YOUR GLOW?

Create silky skin with a vanilla sugar scrub. You will need 100g brown sugar, 30ml almond oil, 10-14 drops vanilla essential oil.

- Mix together the sugar and almond oil. Add the vanilla essential oil, drop by drop, across the surface. Stir gently and thoroughly. As vanilla has a strong fragrance, you may want to start low and build up. Pack the scrub into a jar and use when needed.

TO USE Work over wet skin in a circular motion from your feet to your neck. Rinse off first with warm water, then cooler water, for brighter skin.

Banging head?

Before you reach for pills, try a nicer way with trusty ginger. It may be fiery, but it's also naturally soothing.

- Take 1tsp of carrier oil (such as sweet almond), add 2 drops of ginger essential oil and mix. Now massage the oil into those throbbing temples, using the pads of your second or ring fingers to keep things gentle. Ginger is also good at reviving a tired mind, so breathe in as you massage.

TOP TIP Why not decant your oil mix into a rollerball for easy application? Try G Baldwin & Co Glass Roll On Bottle, £1.19 (baldwins.co.uk).

BUSY DAY AHEAD?

You need a bright morning body wash in your daily shower.

- To a bottle of fragrance-free body wash, add 55 drops of rosemary, 30 drops of peppermint and 40 drops of lemon essential oils. Shake well, then let the body wash sit for 1 hour to blend.

Use this zesty wash every morning – it will leave you feeling alert and refreshed.

TRY Create Your Own Hair & Body Wash, £6.50 for 250ml (nealsyardremedies.com).

Feet killing you?

Revive tired toes with a peppermint-tea footbath. You will need 2 peppermint tea bags, 1tbsp each of honey and cider vinegar, 2 drops each of peppermint and lemon essential oils, and 1 handful of Epsom salts.

- Make a strong pot of peppermint tea with 500ml water. Remove the tea bags and add the honey and cider vinegar.
- Pour into a footbath/bowl. Swish through the essential oils and Epsom salts until the salts have dissolved. Top up with warm water to cover feet for a deliciously soothing and skin-softening soak.

TOP TIP If your feet are cold, you could simply add 2-3 drops of cinnamon essential oil into a bowl of warm water and let the spicy mix work its magic.

TRY Teapigs Peppermint Leaves Tea, £4.19 for 15 bags (hollandandbarrett.com).

Festive indigestion?

A peppermint tummy massage could do the trick.

- Put a couple of drops of peppermint essential oil into 1tbsp of your favourite carrier oil. We like wheatgerm or jojoba, but virgin olive oil or sunflower would do, too.
- Work the oils over your abdomen in nice, easy, rhythmic clockwise moves. Keep doing this until your tum feels easier. It can also help if you're feeling constipated.

TRY G Baldwin & Co Peppermint Pure Essential Oil, £5.09 for 10ml (baldwins.co.uk).

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY/TRUNK ARCHIVE

> ‘THE FRAGRANCE OF MANDARINS REMINDS US OF CHRISTMAS; THE OIL IS AN INSTANT MOOD-BOOSTER’

PEACE, JOY AND... SUFFERING?

Happiness is only possible when our lives are free from complications and challenges, right? Not quite, as Brigid Moss discovers

Every day while I was moving house last year, I thought, 'Why the hell am I doing this?' If you can remember the last time you moved, you'll recollect that it involves months of daily admin, endless decisions, problem solving and packing. It took up so much headspace that I was spinning out with the stress. Then, when I finally moved, every appliance seemed to break at once and every building bill cost around £1,000. Lockdown added time and complications, and made me feel more alone in my struggle, too.

Now, nearly a year later, the bad memories have faded. What comes back to me are the joyful moments. The whoosh of excitement when the solicitor called to say the house was mine. Lighting the first fire in the wood burner. The first glass of wine on a blanket in the garden. Waking up on a Sunday to the village church bells, with my little dog under the duvet.

Those moments would not have been as beautiful without the struggle that came first, according to Paul Bloom, a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto. In his new book, *The Sweet Spot: The Pleasures Of Suffering And The Search For Meaning*, he explores the reasons why humans gravitate towards challenging and complex things, such as moving house, but also anything you've had to put effort into, whether that's starting a business or even cooking Christmas dinner.

'The more you work for something, the more value it has,' says Bloom. 'So much of our lives is now easy. Now, we can download a book or a song instantly, but in fact we value it less.' So, difficulty can lead to a greater sense of accomplishment and make the sweet seem that much sweeter.

However, Bloom says, having looked at the evidence: not all suffering has meaning. He believes it would be cruel to say that experiencing a loss – of a loved one, of our health, of our income; the hard stuff that is part of the human condition – is anything other than bad. You may have grown up in a family that didn't support you, or experienced trauma, or you feel sad or angry or unsupported, or all of these. You might have found lockdown extremely hard, for example, especially if you were alone, or lost loved ones to Covid-19.

Some psychologists theorise that we can experience post-traumatic growth from going through these terrible things, but Bloom says the evidence shows this kind of pain has limited value: 'We will never enjoy the type of emotional pain we don't choose.'

Though, there are two small glimmers of positivity that can come from unchosen suffering. According to Bloom, there is 'some evidence that some amount of suffering in your life does make you kinder and more resilient'. And finding ways to transform loss and pain – for example, those who start charities in honour of their loved ones – can help some people with their recovery.

'SOME AMOUNT OF SUFFERING MAKES YOU KINDER'

We also know that grief eventually shifts. And at some point, we may get some bittersweet pleasure from remembering those we love who we have lost. 'As writer Zadie Smith said, "It hurts as much as it's worth,"' Bloom says. 'In some way, the pain is a recognition of that person's importance.' And then the pain is worth experiencing.

But, he says, the suffering we choose – taking on a huge work project, moving away with no support network, running a marathon – is where we can find real value and meaning. Life won't always be rainbows and sunshine, but maybe that's the whole point.

Pain, then pleasure

It's the contrast that counts, says Bloom. Remember an exam you had to work hard for? When you passed, wasn't the feeling of achievement even sweeter, knowing you had grafted for it? This also explains the feeling of coming out of a hot sauna and diving into a cool lake, or a spicy curry followed by a cold beer.

The key is that it's 'release from unpleasantness', says

Bloom. However, for any suffering to feel good at all, it has to feel safe. If you were on a rollercoaster and looked down to discover you weren't wearing a safety belt, you wouldn't feel the usual pleasurable fear, just pure and awful fear.

Suffering can feel right

We humans feel pleasure from indulging in our negative emotions, too. That might be listening to songs that make us sad or watching movies that make us cry – whether that's the classic Christmas weepie *It's A Wonderful Life* or disaster movies such as *The Impossible*. It's unclear exactly why, but University of Oxford researchers found that the emotional wringing you get from tragedy can actually trigger the endorphin system responsible for positive feelings.

We also enjoy practising other negative emotions, such as fear, in ways that feel safe, which is why you might like horror films or thrillers. In fact, watching true-crime documentaries from the comfort of our sofas can have a similar impact. Some people like experiencing a pretend sort of anger by doing the battle simulations of gaming, or the organised fighting of martial arts.

According to Bloom, watching zombie or dystopian movies offers emotional practice for what happens if society falls apart. 'As Stephen King said, "We make up imaginary horrors to help us deal with real ones,"' says Bloom. Fictional suffering also satisfies our moral side: we want to see the good characters win and the baddies get their comeuppance.

Difficulty gives life meaning

You imagine that one day life will be perfect, with no pain and struggle at all, only pleasure. 'A lot of people think that humans are natural hedonists, caring only about pleasure, but a life well lived isn't just about pleasure, it involves finding meaning, too.' Struggle and difficulty are an essential part of feeling we are living a purposeful life. 'I've learned that people will choose to do difficult things if they have meaning,' he says.

Consider having children. Zero parents call that easy. 'Day to day, it kind of sucks!' says Bloom. This is backed up by studies where people are given beepers for the day, set to go off randomly. 'When the beeper goes off, [they] have to answer questions: What are you doing? And how much pleasure is it giving you? When people are with their kids – especially their younger kids – their score is lower.' However – and this is a big however – most parents and carers will say that caring for the children they love gives their life deeper meaning.

One thing to note, says Bloom, is there's no point in looking for meaning by making comparisons with people we don't know – those on social media, for example. 'So much of life is a social arms race,' says Bloom, and taking part in this leaves us stuck in a cycle of wanting more and better.

So a friend says she only makes the effort to do a full-on Christmas – from elf on the shelf and sparkly decorations to Christmas Eve boxes – for her children, and that makes the hard work fulfilling. Others do Christmas for their parents or wider family. 'If you didn't have this external appreciation, would you go to all that trouble? The result is a wonderful triumph because you've done it for your family and the people you love, or for your community,' says Bloom. And that makes up for any pain.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR LIFE PAIN/ PLEASURE RATIO

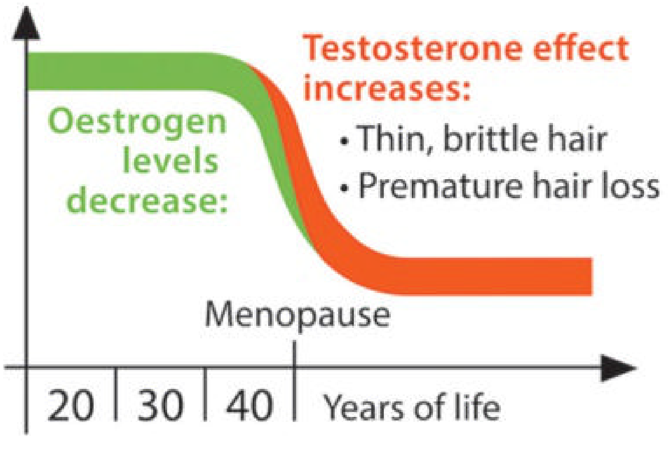
- **Being grateful boosts your mood.** To get the benefits, you need to give thanks without comparing yourself with others. 'Thinking about other people who might be having a worse time than you has cheered up nobody,' says Bloom.
- **Look for meaning, not money, if you can.** 'Pursuing extrinsic goals related to praise and reward – looking attractive, making money and building up social status – makes you less happy and less fulfilled, and is linked with depression, anxiety and mental illness. The trick is to get money in the course of other, meaningful, pursuits.'
- **Give more.** 'There's good psychological evidence that if you want to be happy, the quick fix is often giving. There are studies where subjects are given money, say £20, and told they have to buy something for themselves, or give it to somebody else. Over and over, the robust finding is that when you give it to somebody else, you are happier. It sounds saccharine, but giving gives you real satisfaction.'
- **Remember, we're not built to be happy all the time.** And feeling bad is a message that you need to do things differently. 'Pain, sadness and loneliness offer information about what's wrong, and can be an inducement to make things better.'

The Sweet Spot: Suffering, Pleasure And The Key To A Good Life (Bodley Head) by Paul Bloom is out 4th November

PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLERYSTOCK

Hair loss? Plantur 39 is a revelation.

One in three women experience hair loss or thinning hair. This is due to the fact that as a woman approaches the menopause, oestrogen levels decline and the negative impact of testosterone rises. This hormonal fluctuation can lead to hair thinning or hair loss, and the effect can be dramatic.



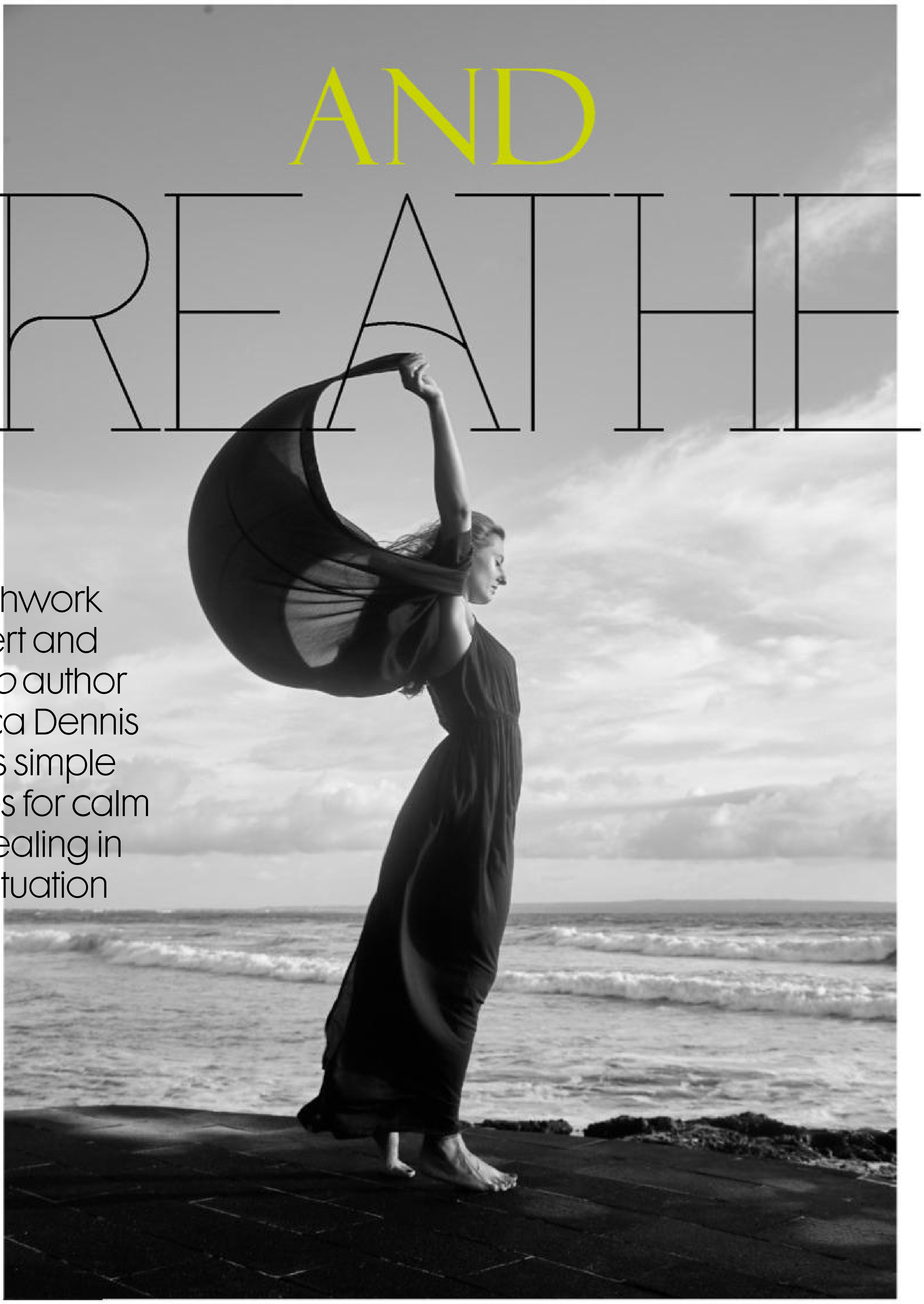
Plantur 39 Shampoo and Tonic are formulated with a Phyto-Caffeine ingredient that penetrates all the way into the hair follicle.

If used regularly it may help reduce the effect of these hormones on the hair roots, which could help reduce hair thinning or hair loss during and after the menopause.

Dr. Wolff • est. 1905
Plantur 39
for hair over forty
Phyto-Caffeine Shampoo
For coloured and stressed hair
MADE IN GERMANY
Dr. Wolff • est. 1905
Plantur 39
for hair over forty
Phyto-Caffeine Tonic
MADE IN GERMANY

Plantur 39 is available at Boots, pharmacies and leading supermarkets.

AND BREATHE…



Breathwork
expert and
Let It Go author
Rebecca Dennis
shares simple
exercises for calm
and healing in
any situation

We can change our physiology by adjusting our breathing, says Dennis

At times of crisis, we're often told to 'just breathe'. Yet how often do we actually think about the functionality of our breath? 'Oxygen is the most essential natural resource required by our cells,' says breathwork coach Rebecca Dennis. 'We can go without food for up to 40 days and water for three days, yet we get into trouble after just moments of not breathing.'

In short, breath equals life – which is why, according to Dennis, 'Learning how to use the full capacity of our natural breathing system is comparable to giving our body and mind an MOT.' And it seems this type of reset is sorely needed. Dennis continues: 'The majority of adults and teenagers I see have dysfunctional breathing patterns and are not using their respiratory system to its full capacity.'

Dennis has been studying and practising holistic therapies for more than 20 years. She came across breathwork 12 years ago and credits it with changing her life. 'Stimulation, activity and demands are all around us, and our responsibilities, commitments and worries stop us feeling calm and staying in the moment. However, we can consciously change our physiology and mindset by adjusting the depth, rhythm and rate of our breathing.'

Why breathwork?

Whether you're feeling the pressure from work deadlines or struggling to process the latest news, conscious breathing can help reduce your stress levels in less than five minutes, increasing your focus and concentration and influencing the way you respond to whatever life throws at you. You won't be stuck in the past or future, or caught in a spiral of racing thoughts. It can also boost brainpower, productivity and the immune system, as around 70% of toxins are released from our body through our breath. 'I've seen people experience incredible transformations, from asthma relief to improved symptoms of autoimmune disease,' says Dennis.

> 'IT'S LIKE AN MOT FOR YOUR BODY AND MIND'

'The breath is like an instrument; the more we play with it, the more attuned we become. In the same way as we exercise our bodies to get fit and build muscle, breathwork is a gym workout for the whole respiratory system.'

Here, she shares her favourite breathwork techniques for different scenarios when you might need them most.

When you're angry: figure-of-8 breathing

When we're furious, there's a tendency for us to hold our breath, contract our muscles or shallow-breathe. Our breath can feel stuck or laboured and it's harder to gather our thoughts as our minds go into a spin.

To bring balance, begin by using your breath to expand the lower abdominals on the inhale and contract on the exhale. Take slow, gentle breaths in through and out of the nose. Relax your shoulders and bring your focus to the breath that's moving your belly. As you breathe in and out, visualise a figure of '8' starting from the pelvis, travelling just above your belly button up to your chest, and back around again.

Continue this visualisation while gently following the breath. Inhale through your nose for 4 counts. Exhale through your nose for 4 counts. If this feels too hard or forced, bring it down to three counts. Continue this for 1 to 2 minutes.

When you're facing a big decision: alternate-nostril breathing

Also known as nadi shodhana, this tried-and-tested yoga technique will help sharpen your focus on what you need. Start by sitting comfortably, either on a chair or cross-legged on the floor. Hold out your right hand and press the tips of your pointer and middle fingers into your palm, leaving your ring finger, little finger and thumb extended.

Bring your hand up in front of your face and press your thumb on the outside of one nostril. Inhale deeply through your open nostril. At the peak of your inhalation, release your thumb, press your ring finger on the outside of your other nostril, and exhale. Continue this pattern for 1 to 2 minutes before switching sides, so you inhale through the nostril that you originally used to exhale and vice versa. Spend equal amounts of time inhaling and exhaling through both nostrils.

When you're nervous: deep diaphragmatic activation

This diaphragm release exercise is a quick way to ease tension before a big presentation or meeting. Use your second and third fingers to press gently (known as acupressure) on the diaphragm, which is just under the ribcage, as you breathe in, then let go as you breathe out. Practise this for 1 to 2 minutes.

Your solar plexus area is just underneath your sternum and below the ribcage. This can be very tight – especially if we find it hard to let go of control. Again, use gentle acupressure here as you inhale, only letting go on the exhale. Remember to push not on the bone, but just into the space under your ribcage. Breathe deeply into your belly and keep your awareness there. Try this for 1 minute and repeat the affirmation: 'I let go'.

When you lack energy: breath of fire

This is a great way to boost your energy levels and digestive system if you're feeling sluggish and fatigued. It's all too easy to reach for a coffee or sweet snack; instead, use this dynamic abdominal breath exercise to wake up your mind.

Begin sitting in an upright position with spine straight and your hands relaxed on your thighs. Take a long, slow inhale through your nose. Then exhale powerfully (also through your nose) while contracting your lower belly.

Your body will naturally inhale again, so focus mainly on your forceful exhalations as you continue this breathing technique. Once you're comfortable with the abdominal contraction, repeat for 15 seconds, then take a long breath and let go with a big sigh, exhaling through your mouth. Repeat for another 15 seconds.

When you're overwhelmed: the 4-7-8 technique

This exercise can help you switch the nervous system to a relaxed state. Begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Press the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth, slightly open your mouth, then exhale until you reach the bottom of your breath. Close your mouth and quietly inhale through your nose for 4 counts. Then hold your breath for 7 counts. Exhale slowly and gently for a total of 8 counts to return to the bottom of your breath. Repeat for 4 full breaths, working your way up to 8 breaths over time.

Let It Go: Breathe Yourself Calm (Ebury) by Rebecca Dennis is out now

COMPILED BY: ELLA DOVE. PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY/YURI GORYANOY

CARE CIRCL

Lying in the dark, I felt ill and exhausted. I'd spent the first months of 2018 as the primary carer for my mum, who was battling cancer. She'd been in and out of hospital for chemotherapy and countless complications. My life was an impossible attempt to juggle her needs and my job as a policy adviser on human trafficking, going to hospital before and after work. I'd started having night terrors about her death, seeing her face contorted. I'd wake up shaking and crying at the hopelessness of the situation.

As I lay there with only my fever and thoughts of Mum's suffering for company, I'd never felt so alone.

It shouldn't have been that way. My mum was single and had few friends, so her life didn't afford much support, but mine should've been different. I had a boyfriend, but he was focused on fun nights and lazy Sundays. I had friends, too, but our connections were occasional brunches or drinks after work, erratic texts and social media 'likes'. My loneliness ached so much that I felt I was being hollowed out. Something had to change. I'd seen a video on YouTube a few months previously – someone in New Zealand had talked about the 'women's circle' she attended. They met up each month and shared what was going on in their lives, sipping tea and listening to one another as they sat in a circle. She said she didn't realise how much she needed it until she went. I hadn't paid much attention, but now the idea resurfaced. Could I do something similar?

This wouldn't be the same as standard friendship. According to the Cambridge Dictionary definition, a friend is 'a person you know well and like a lot, but who is usually not a member of your family'. It's a noun, but I was more interested in the verb of being a friend, and how that might create a safety net of care in an unpredictable and cruel world.

Life is different now – we don't have the same community structures and large families to prop us up as we used to. Many of us need friends to act as our family if we're going to have sufficient support. In sociology, the term 'fictive kin' describes the idea of 'chosen family', people with very close bonds and a sense of obligation towards one another, but who aren't tied by blood or marriage. This was what I needed.

I reached out to 15 women I knew. Seven were interested, so I asked them to invite a couple more friends, widening out the circle to ensure it felt new and unique, rather than people who all already knew one another. The first gathering, 90 minutes on a drizzly evening that September, was terrifying. They smiled and waited expectantly. Now what? But it turned out to be the beginning of something incredible.

We met – and continue to meet – monthly, either at one another's houses or online, depending on pandemic rules. We begin with a simple meditation before giving everyone time to speak about their lives. Our rules set this apart from standard social interactions. We speak in turn, never interrupting one another. We don't offer advice unless it is asked for: so often in life, we can feel silenced because we don't want to solicit well-meaning but ill-conceived attempts to 'solve' us. It's an older way of sharing emotions than therapy, harking back to collective cultures in which we related to one another as kin, rather than professionals and patients. Sometimes, if someone's very upset, it can feel worrying – we're not therapists; is it okay to witness distress? But it has been beautiful to learn how to sit with one another's pain or challenges, to reach out an arm and let someone know that all these women are with her.

Inevitably, we've each come to the circle at different life stages. There have been break-ups, new loves, pregnancies, workplace issues and health scares. Not everyone can attend every month, but we come to as many as we can because we know from experience how much it nourishes us. All the original members remain in the circle and, if anything, our commitment to it grows stronger as it continues. Although I started the circle and was the de facto leader, now a different person leads each month, helping to share the work and spread a sense of ownership.

When Emily Kenway was at her lowest ebb, she realised she lacked a support system to help her stay afloat. So she decided to build one from scratch – and you can, too

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Studies show that feeling lonely and unsupported is associated with worse immune system function, higher risks of heart disease and stroke, worse outcomes for some cancers and increases in depression. By participating in, and maintaining, the circle, we nourish our social bonds and, in turn, ourselves. This only became more crucial as the pandemic took hold. Covid-19 woke everyone up to the importance of community, but the question was how to create such a thing in the 21st century. We had our answer already, thankfully, and it helped us cope. We celebrate successes and joys, but the circle's greatest value has been in times of need. A few months in, I had flu symptoms, which suddenly got worse. I felt like I was drowning from the inside. At A&E, a receptionist asked for my next of kin. Whose details would I give? My boyfriend and I had broken up and my mum was fighting for her life (my dad's not really in the picture). Then I remembered: the circle. So far, we hadn't supported each other outside those monthly meetings. But I needed someone, so I gave the name and number of one of the women who had a flexible work schedule. She took me home to bed, armed with medication for pneumonia. And when my mother died in September 2020, it was comforting to know I had a group of women who could be like mothers to me. By then, the circle was two years old and we had created a strong sense of community – a new sort of family, even. My hospital trip was the first of many instances of support beyond our meetings.

I wanted others to experience the same benefits we've found in the circle. With the other women, I made a guide that explains everything about starting and maintaining a care circle. I've worked for years on migrants' rights, and I know that refugees are often the most isolated people, so you can download the guide by donating to the charity Women for Refugee Women. By supporting ourselves, we help women most in need, too. But what's not in the guide is the most important thing you'll need if you want stronger bonds: the courage to try something new.

CREATE YOUR OWN CARE CIRCLE

Decide the purpose of the circle – is it for new mothers? Or for those caring for elderly parents? This will help you explain your invitation to the people you approach, and will help you attract the right people.

Approach around 15 people, aiming to eventually have between eight and 12 in the circle for a manageable size. I invited friends, who in turn invited friends; you could also post on a local/online noticeboard or invite people who attend a class that demonstrates a shared interest.

Don't be offended if some people you invite say it's not for them, or drop out early – the right people will be drawn to the circle and that'll make it stronger over time.

At the first meeting, co-create a 'circle agreement' – these are your ground rules. In my circle, we don't have phones and we say 'thank you' after each person has spoken. Yours might be different, but co-creating rules will establish norms and expectations.

It'll probably feel quite weird at first. Stick with it!

Practise active listening – when someone is speaking, listen instead of preparing what to say next.

Schedule the first few dates ahead of time. There's nothing more annoying than thousands of harried WhatsApp messages about what dates people can and can't do.

Never cancel a circle meeting. People will stop believing it'll happen and their commitment will wane. Continuity and confidence are key to longevity.

Download the full guide, Together: A Guide To Creating Collective Care Circles, at emilykenway.com/carecircles

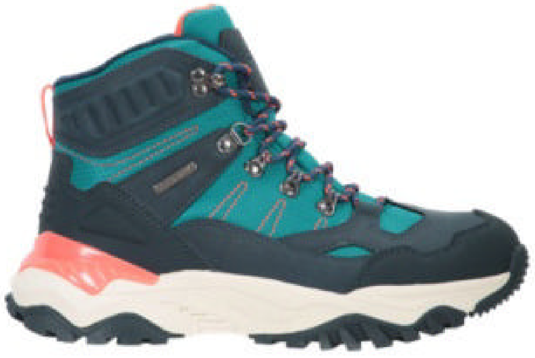
THE BEST... WALKING BOOTS

The right footwear can be the difference between a gruelling hike and an enjoyable adventure. These will help you stride to success

Red APPROVED 2021

HOW WE TESTED

We tested 21 different boots in warm, cold, wet and dry conditions, with each pair put through their paces by three people. We checked any waterproofing and breathability claims, with comfort, fit, grip, design, ease of cleaning and overall performance also considered when deciding their final score.



WINNER

MOUNTAIN WAREHOUSE HIKE WOMEN'S WATERPROOF RECYCLED BOOTS

(£80, next.co.uk) Score: 88/100

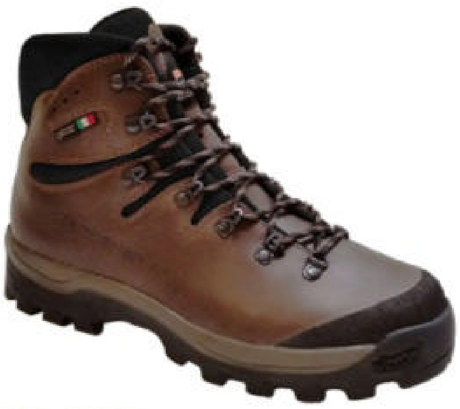
Expect great grip and plenty of support from these robust boots. They're water-resistant, too, protecting our testers' feet as they trudged through muddy puddles. Due to their bulky build, we found they were best suited to longer, heavy-duty hikes.

RUNNER-UP

ZAMBERLAN UNISEX VIRTEX GTX RR WALKING BOOTS

(£190, tiso.com) Score: 87/100

Made with durable, hydrobloc full-grain leather, these boots blend classic looks with modern technologies to deliver quality performance. They were brilliantly versatile, handled even the harshest of terrains, and provided plenty of ankle support on uneven surfaces.

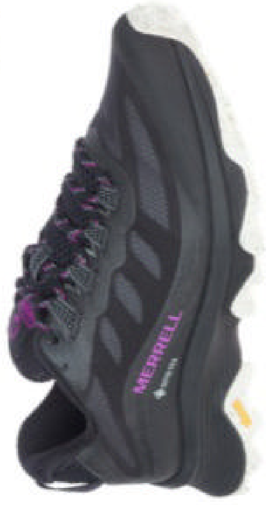


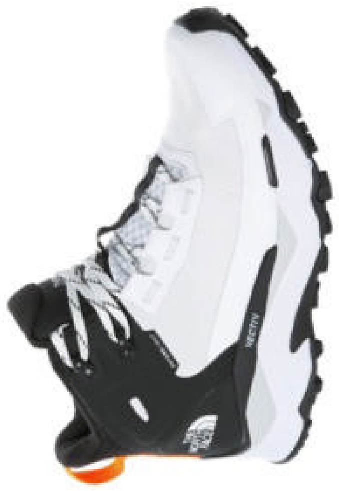
BEST ECO CHOICE

MERRELL WOMEN'S MOAB SPEED GORE-TEX

(£125, merrell.com) Score: 86/100

Thanks to their lightweight design and low ankle, these boots were flexible from their first wear and never made the testers' feet ache. They're also waterproof, made with recycled materials and vegan-friendly. Our testers felt they performed best on shorter walks due to their lighter design.



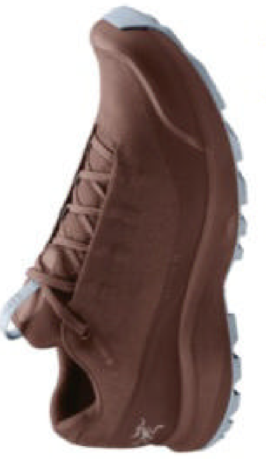


MOST STYLISH

THE NORTH FACE WOMEN'S VECTIV EXPLORIS FUTURELIGHT BOOTS

(£155, thenorthface.co.uk) Score: 86/100

We liked the fresh aesthetic of these bright boots, and our testers were also impressed by the cushioned sole, which was comfortable across most terrains and distances. The boots were light, too, so even when the temperature rose, their feet didn't overheat.



MOST COMFORTABLE

ARC'TERYX WOMEN'S AERIOS FL GTX SHOE

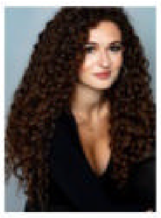
(£150, arcteryx.com) Score: 82/100

These boots fitted more like trainers, with the wide and flexible upper proving easy to slip into and supremely comfortable. The bouncy sole had plenty of flexion, ideal for shorter jaunts and even trail running, though the shoes lack the ankle support for more challenging treks.

WORDS: HARRY BULLMORE. TESTING: YANAR ALKAYAT. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

ON MY WISH LIST...

The WELLNESS *influencer*



GIVE THE GIFT OF FEELGOOD THIS CHRISTMAS WITH HEALTH AND WELLBEING EDITOR ARIELLE TCHIPROUT'S TOP PICKS

WORKOUT WONDERS

The ideal kit for aching muscles, with bath salts, an essential-oil blend and body oil. *Exercise Recovery Set, £80, anatomé*

anatomē
Energy + Strength
anatomē
Muscle Ease Body Oil
anatomē
Muscle Ease + Skin Restoring Bath Salts

BELOW: Secure, supportive and as comfortable as a second skin, this set will delight the gym bunny in your life. CLAUDE BRAS, £38 each; matching LEGGINGS, £55 each, all Pocket Sport

DARLING
AUGUST & PIERS
LONDON

With love

From the sustainable candle brand loved by Rosie Huntington-Whiteley comes this glorious new scent, with a cedarwood base and rose and bergamot head notes.

DARLING CANDLE, £64, August & Piers

A GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

Treat a loved one to a gift voucher for one of The School of Life's mind-expanding virtual events; they can choose from topics such as 'How to make love last' and 'How to be confident' by top experts. *Event gift vouchers, from £55 (or £40 for members), The School of Life*

dream team
A fast and effective bedtime duo to support a good night's sleep
thisworks

SILENT NIGHT

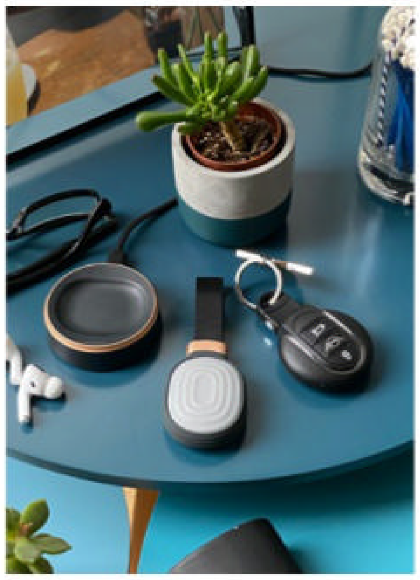
Described as 'the blanket that hugs you back', the Mela weighted blanket calms anxiety, encourages deeper sleep and is both cosy and breathable. *From £120, Mela Comfort*

ABOVE RIGHT: Mini versions of This Works' cult favourite Deep Sleep Pillow Spray and Stress Check Breathe In roll-on also help encourage restorative, restful sleep. THIS WORKS DREAM TEAM, £10

Self-care stocking fillers

Made from fine cashmere yarns, these luxuriously soft socks can be monogrammed for a personal touch.

TABITHA CASHMERE SOCKS, £32, Pantherella

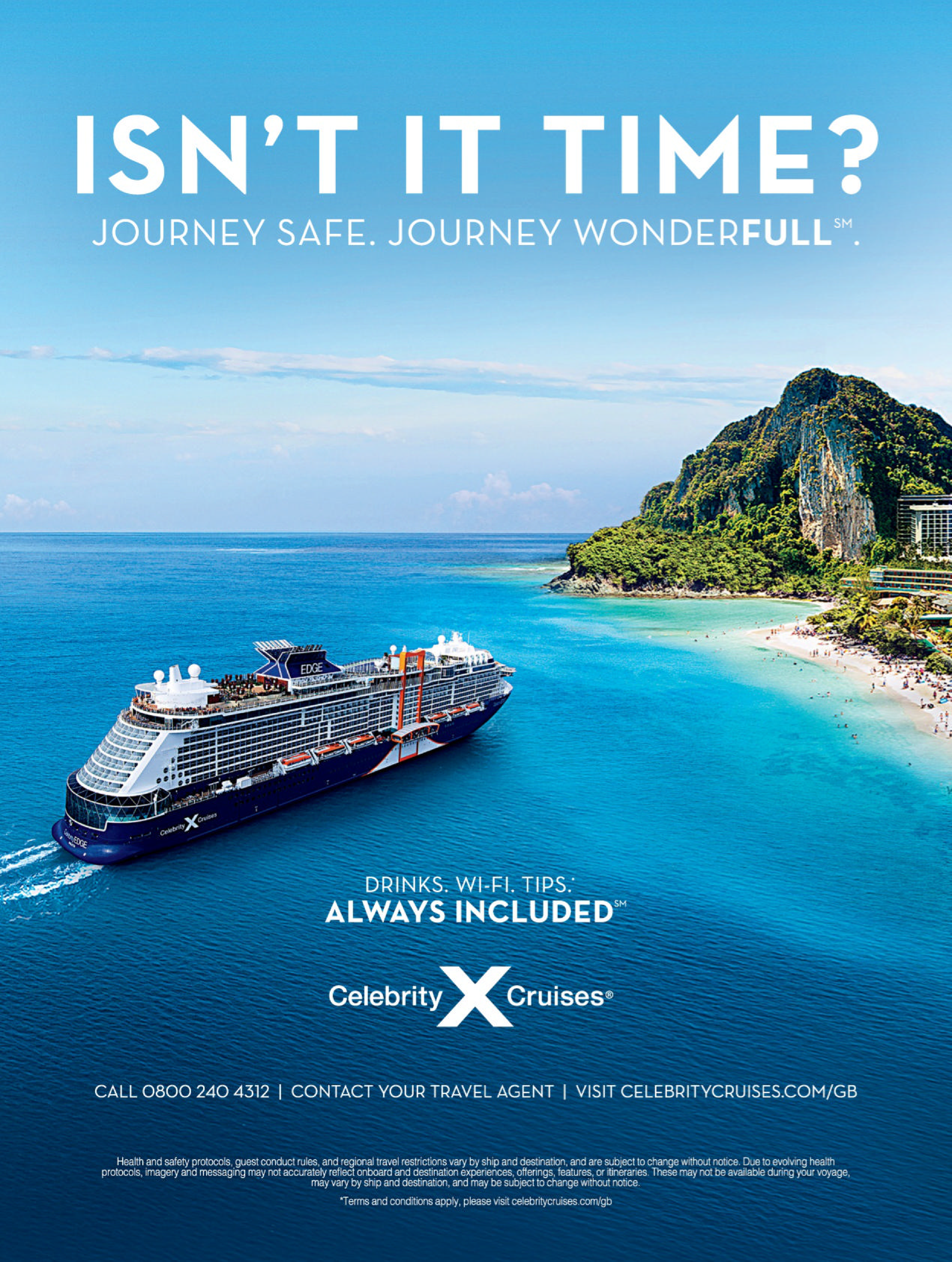


This nifty hand-held breathing exercise device allows you to meditate and find calm on the go.

MELO BREATHING AID, £49.99, theawellbeing.com

For someone who finds clarity in organisation and creativity, a journal makes the perfect gift.

UNDATED GOAL PLANNER, £19.99, YOP & TOM



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Escapes

EDITED BY
SARAH TOMCZAK

Amazing

adjective:
causing great
surprise
or wonder;
astonishing

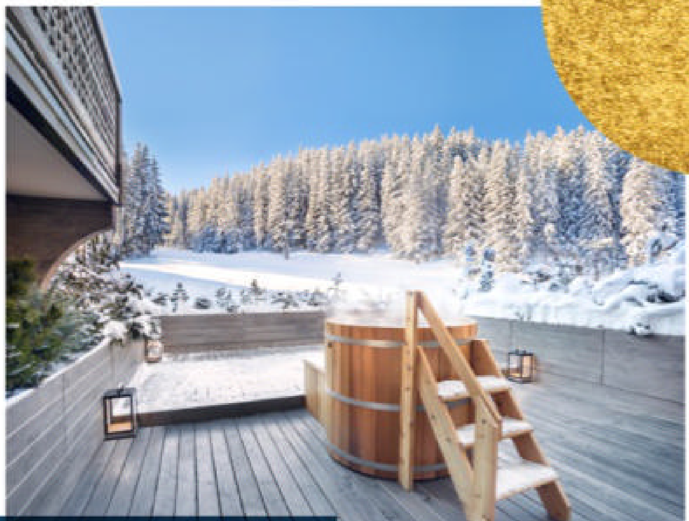
From whizzing down powdery slopes to the cosseting comforts of après-ski, these fabulous European hotels offer a truly luxurious experience.

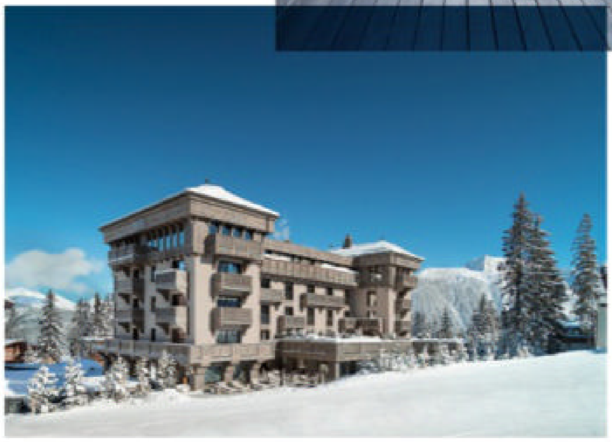
AMAN LE MÉLÉZIN, FRANCE

Open from December to April, Aman Le Mélézin is a serene sanctuary nestled between snow-dusted pine forests in the French resort of Courchevel. The hotel has even introduced a team of butlers, on hand to transport equipment from the heated racks in the state-of-the-art ski room to the piste, as well as a First Tracks experience that takes guests to the highest point in the valley for the freshest snow. Return for some après-ski on the magnificent sun terrace before a dinner of sushi, sashimi and signature dishes such as Wagyu beef and otoro tuna at Nama, the hotel's Japanese restaurant.

ROOMS FROM £1,380 A NIGHT HALF-BOARD, AMANLEMELEZIN.COM

> *Set in the heart of Les Trois Vallées, the hotel offers breathtaking views*

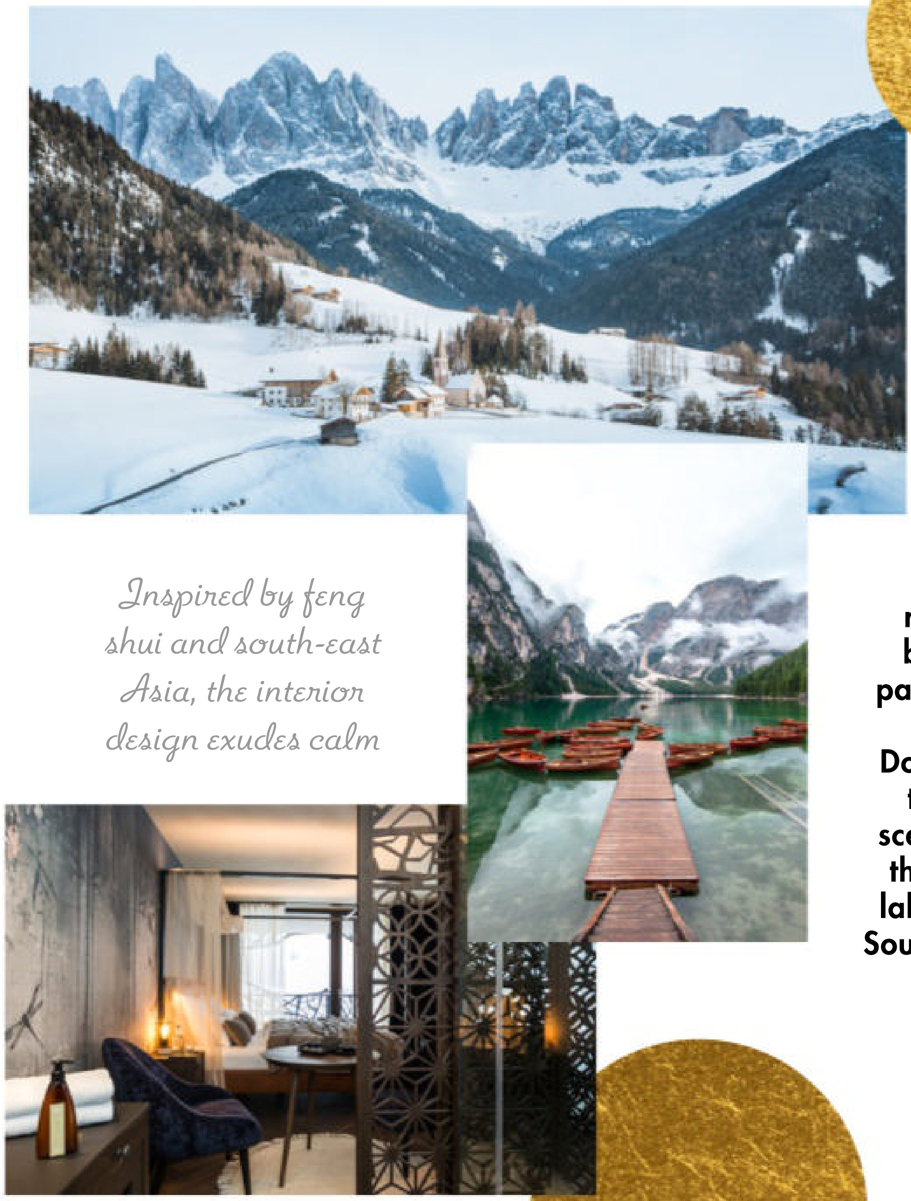




Above: The Chambre Ski Piste with Hot Tub rooms overlook the beautiful Bellcôte Piste. Left: The hotel is in the heart of Courchevel

SILENA, ITALY

The pretty village of Vals in Italy's South Tyrol is quickly gaining a reputation as the ultimate Alpine retreat, and the enchanting boutique hotel Silena provides even more reason to visit. The property is perched 1,354m above sea level, overlooking some of the area's best ski slopes, and its striking exterior pays tribute to the mountainous surroundings. Indoors, romantic south-east Asian-inspired suites feature wraparound balconies, private saunas, roll-top baths and wood burners, while the restaurant serves regional dishes and excellent local wine. Visit the rooftop spa, with its Finnish sauna and outdoor pool, or unwind at one of the daily yoga and meditation classes. *ROOMS FROM AROUND £120 A NIGHT, SILENA.COM*

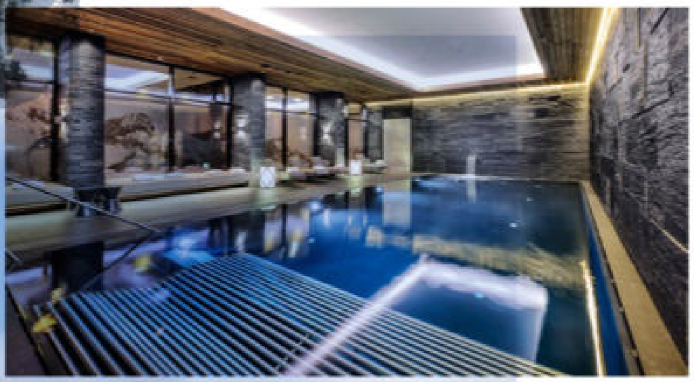


Inspired by feng shui and south-east Asia, the interior design exudes calm

From top: A rooftop suite balcony with panoramic view; the famous Dolomite peaks; the stunning scenery of the of the South Tyrol lakes; one of the Soulful rooms with open-plan bathroom

Right: The hotel has splendid views of the alpine landscape and an indoor pool. Below: Traditional wood features on the exterior and interiors

With just nine suites and a two-storey private residence, the hotel has an intimate, boutique feel



SEVERIN*S THE ALPINE RETREAT, AUSTRIA

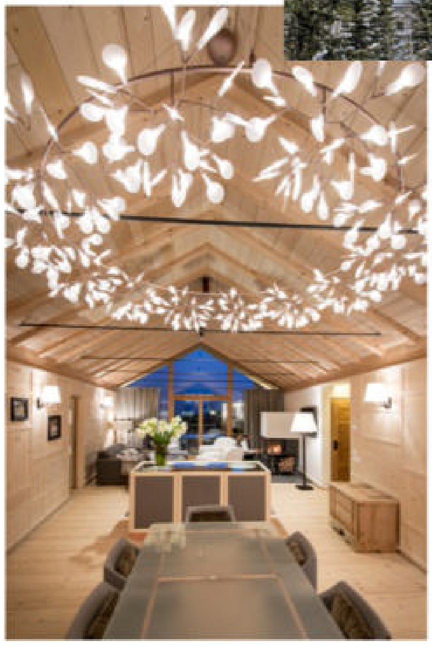
Overlooking the picturesque Arlberg region, part of Austria's largest interconnected ski area, Severin*s the Alpine Retreat offers a relaxing home away from home, with nine luxurious suites that come complete with pine interiors, fireplaces and fur throws. This season, embark on one of the newly created hiking trails, which skirt frozen rivers and weave through ancient forests in the fairy-tale snowscape, or warm up in the superbly appointed wellness centre, which has a sauna, gym and indoor pool. For special occasions, Severin*s can also arrange a private dining experience at a remote mountain hut, where you can feast on steak or fondue.

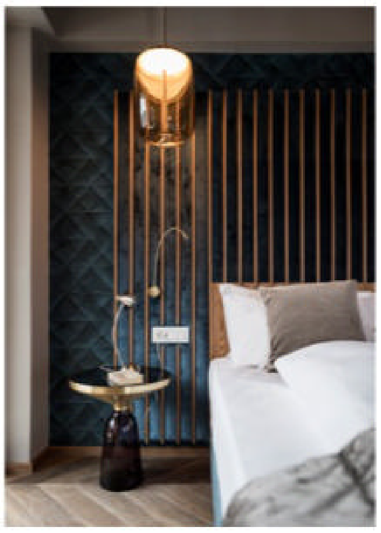
ROOMS FROM AROUND £625 A NIGHT, SEVERINS-LECH.AT/EN

ROSA ALPINA, ITALY

Alta Badia, located high in the Italian Dolomites, holds the title of the gourmet ski capital of the world and the family-owned Rosa Alpina hotel is one of the best places to stay to experience the region's food and drink. Home to Norbert Niederkofler's three Michelin-starred St Hubertus restaurant, it also offers a wine bar and grill, a cosy fondue room and a breakfast venue with stunning forest views. The immaculate spa features two pools, one adults-only and the other for families. The original building dates from 1850 and its interiors blend traditional wood-panelled ceilings and frescoed walls with contemporary styling and clean lines; for an exceptionally chic sojourn, book the private residence Châlet Zeno, which offers Rosa Alpina's full hotel services on tap.
ROOMS FROM AROUND £460 A NIGHT INCLUDING BREAKFAST, ROSALPINA.IT

Fine dining has cemented the hotel's reputation as a foodie haven





Above: Stunning contemporary design in Châlet Zeno and the Penthouse suite contrast with the traditional exterior

LES FERMES DE MARIE, FRANCE

This snug five-star hotel in the snowy, fir-clad French Alps is the epitome of romantic charm, with blazing log fires and wraparound wood inside and out – rugged, cosy, luxurious and, above all, gourmet. Each morning, an extraordinary smorgasbord of breads and patisserie appears as if by magic, while at the hoteliers' restored hillside barn, accessible via a walk through the snow, you can sample fondue made with three local cheeses, served alongside glasses of Apremont Vin de Savoie, a dry white local wine. Of course, you go to Megève to ski – the resort has an impressive 445km of pistes, two cable cars, seven gondolas, 27 chairlifts and 39 drag lifts. But the combination of ski and après-ski has earned the resort the nickname of the 21st arrondissement of Paris, having long been the Alpine destination of the glamorous set, including Audrey Hepburn, Sacha Distel and Charles Aznavour.

ROOMS FROM AROUND £305 A ROOM A NIGHT, INCLUDING BREAKFAST AND A DAY TRIP TO LA FERME DE BACRÉ, FERMESDEMARIE.COM

The hotel has a rustic charm that has been attracting guests for more than 30 years

Left: The indoor swimming pool with wooden beams. Below: Guests can visit La Ferme de Bacré, the mountain farmhouse home of the owners

PRICES CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PRESS. PHOTOGRAPHY: BORIS BALDINGER & OLIVER PLATTNER/UNSPLASH, GETTY, STEFANO SCATÀ, ALEX FILZ, DANIEL HERENDI, YDO SOL

SAGITTARIUS
THE ARCHER
LEO
THE LION

WALPOLE

From Bentley to Wedgwood, Britain's luxury brands are the greatest in the world

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Illustration by House of Hackney

Red ESCAPES

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

Find peace in the COUNTRY

ESCAPE FROM THE DEMANDS OF A BUSY LIFE AND RELAX WITH A WEEKEND IN THE PEAK DISTRICT, WHERE THE FOCUS IS ENTIRELY ON YOU

Have you ever tried to arrange what should be a simple weekend in the countryside and given up because of all the work involved? Not only do you have to hire a house and get friends together, but you also have to do all the planning and preparation, not to mention the shopping and cooking!

If you're a busy woman (and aren't we all?), then sometimes you just want to pack up and escape from it all. But leaving your work, partner and children behind just isn't that easy… until now. On this new Secret Warriors retreat, exclusively for *Red* readers, you can do exactly that and not have to worry about a thing. All you have to do is pack your weekend bag and grab the book you never seem to have time to read, then we'll do the rest.

You'll arrive at a beautiful venue in a picturesque village in the Peak District on a Friday afternoon, and won't have to lift a finger until you leave on Sunday. Come with a friend or on your own and enjoy some time out from the stresses and strains of everyday life. You'll leave feeling stronger, happier, healthier and able to face 'real life' again.

The entire retreat experience is overseen by Secret Warriors to make sure every little detail is taken care of. More personal than a spa, more homely than a hotel, this unique retreat includes a relaxing treatment, delicious home-cooked food by an expert chef, a group yoga class and, most importantly, free time to explore the local area, go walking or simply unwind and enjoy some much-needed time to yourself.

Try a group yoga class

OUR TRAVEL PARTNERS

Tripsmiths *partners with leading tour operators and media brands to deliver exclusive travel experiences.*

Secret Warriors *runs tailored retreats to help women feel stronger, happier, healthier and more in control of their lives.*

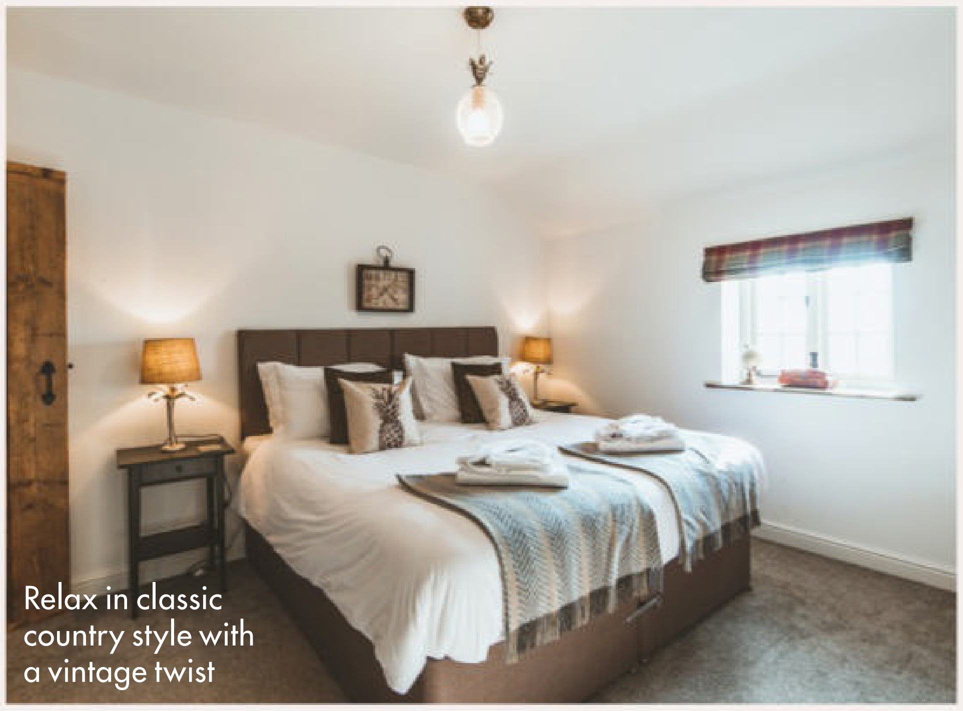
TRIPSMITHS

SecretWarriors

WELEDA Since 1921

Immerse yourself in wild moorlands and tranquil dales in the stunning Peak District

MEET OTHER *RED* READERS AT THIS ALL-INCLUSIVE RETREAT



Relax in classic country style with a vintage twist

Join other *Red* readers in group activities

Reasons to book

RETREAT TO THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

You'll have a stylish en-suite room in a beautifully renovated property owned by a partner of Secret Warriors. Each is exquisitely designed and in a tranquil location.

TIME FOR YOU

A break from your usual routine will give you space to reflect and realise what you really want from life.

HOME-COOKED MEALS WITH LOCAL PRODUCE

All your food will be prepared by local chefs, and all dietary requirements can be catered for.

EXPLORE THE PEAK DISTRICT

All venues are in fabulous beauty spots, within walking distance of popular trails and top attractions, such as stunning Chatsworth House.

PERSONALISED STAY

Each retreat is tailored to guests, so you will be contacted beforehand, with any specific needs you have.

INCLUDED ACTIVITIES

Book a spa treatment during your stay and choose from a range of group activities. Plus, enjoy a gorgeous goodie bag, courtesy of Weleda, a partner of Secret Warriors.

Enjoy healthy home-cooked meals

YOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrive from 3pm and enjoy dinner.

DAY 2 Start the day with a yoga session, followed by breakfast. Spend the morning in nature, exploring the local area before a delicious lunch and afternoon pamper session including a treatment from one of Secret Warriors' expert Weleda therapists.

DAY 3 After breakfast, say goodbye to the friends you've made and head home.

YOU WILL GET THE CHANCE TO...

- Spend two nights in a barn conversion in the Peak District.
- Enjoy delicious breakfasts, lunches and dinners, all cooked by a local chef, with drinks included.
- Relax with one spa treatment.
- Take part in a group yoga session.

PRICE from £595pp*

Deposit: 25%**

DATES 23rd to 25th September 2022

TO BOOK, CALL 0808 239 0668, quoting RED COUNTRY RETREAT

VISIT redonline.co.uk/redretreat for details and itinerary

*Price based on two sharing. Single traveller rate from £750pp. Individual bookings may result in a shared room, but where possible we will endeavour to meet guests' wishes and if individual rooms are available, they'll be allocated to them. Subject to availability. This trip is operated by Secret Warriors and is exclusive to Hearst. **Deposit of 25% required to secure a space, balance payable 12 weeks in advance. If guests cancel 12 weeks in advance, they won't be obliged to pay the balance. Full terms and conditions at secretwarriors.co.uk

DISCOVER MORE exclusive travel offers at redescapes.com

Red ESCAPES EXCLUSIVE OFFER

Lucknam Park

COLERNE, WILTSHIRE

Set in 500 acres of private parkland in Colerne, Wiltshire, Lucknam Park is the country house hotel with everything: a sweeping drive, extensive grounds, stables, a rejuvenating spa with an open-air hydrotherapy pool, and a Michelin-starred restaurant. There is a wide selection of bedrooms to choose from, ranging from cosy to lavish suites. The bedrooms are split between the main house and courtyard, but all have that traditional country-house feel, with beautiful furnishings, mahogany touches and indulgent marble bathrooms.

Dining in Restaurant Hywel Jones is a real highlight. We love the glamour of a pre-dinner cocktail in the drawing room and a digestif in the library while leafing through 19th-century books. Our favourite Hywel Jones dish is a slightly salty, slightly sweet starter of scallops with succulent cubes of smoked eel. Or, if you are looking for something a little more low key, then The Brasserie offers relaxed modern British cuisine.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Two-night stay at Lucknam Park in a Country Room.
- Dinner for two in Restaurant Hywel Jones by Lucknam Park on one evening.
- Dinner in the stylish, informal Brasserie on one evening.
- Full English breakfast each morning.
- One afternoon tea for two.
- A 60-minute spa treatment of your choice per person.
- Full use of the award-winning spa facilities.

PRICE From £699 per person* per two-night stay

HOW TO BOOK Call 01225 562 612, quoting RED. For more details, visit redonline.co.uk/lucknam

Sample the delights of the Michelin-starred restaurant

**Price is based on two sharing a Country Room. This break is available for arrivals between Wednesday and Saturday and is subject to availability. Not valid in conjunction with any other offer or Christmas and New Year periods. Offer expires 9th April 2022. Please note, a booking may be put on provisional hold until the spa can confirm availability.*

TO DISCOVER more of our favourite hotels, visit redonline.co.uk/besthotels

Red
ESCAPES
EXCLUSIVE TOUR

Learn about life in Jordan on a WOMEN-ONLY ADVENTURE

UNCOVER THE ANCIENT ART OF HENNA, SUNBATHE BY THE DEAD SEA AND VISIT PETRA ON A TOUR THAT WILL TAKE YOU BEYOND THE USUAL TOURIST TRACK

Visit Petra and see buildings that have been carved into the rose-pink rock

Bedouin women will introduce you to natural kohl

Jordan is a land that possesses both stunning natural beauty and fascinating customs that stretch back thousands of years. On our exclusive women-only tour, you'll travel in a close-knit group of like-minded readers to see iconic cities, ancient deserts and soak up some sun at glorious beach resorts. You'll meet Bedouin women, learn to cook authentic Jordanian cuisine and spend time having tea and chatting with locals. Relaxing by the Dead Sea, you'll get a taste of how Jordanians like to spend their free time, while a walking tour of Amman will take you to the heart of the city's art and shopping scene.

OUR TRAVEL PARTNERS

Intrepid Travel is the world's leading provider of sustainable, experience-rich, small-group tours, offering more than 800 trips around the world on every continent. Tripsmiths partners with the world's leading tour operators and select media brands to deliver exclusive travel experiences.

INTREPID

TRIPSMITHS

ALWAYS CHECK THE FCDO TRAVEL ADVICE, AS IT INCLUDES THE VERY LATEST INFORMATION ON SAFETY, SECURITY, TRAVEL WARNINGS AND HEALTH. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT GOV.UK/FOREIGN-TRAVEL-ADVICE

SEVEN NIGHTS from £1,280pp*

Reasons to book

TOUR COSMOPOLITAN AMMAN

See Roman buildings and head to Rainbow Street for its buzzing cafes, elegant 1920s villas and galleries.

COOK WITH LOCALS

Take part in a masterclass at cooking school Beit Sitti, run by three sisters who continue their grandmother's legacy.

SEE ANCIENT MONUMENTS

Marvel at Greco-Roman ruins in Jerash, including striking archways, public buildings and colonnaded streets. Plus, visit Petra, also known as the Rose City, which is revered for its ancient buildings carved into the rose-pink rock.

LEARN ABOUT DESERT LIFE

Visit Wadi Rum and its Bedouin people, and explore its sandstone mountains and vast, echoing landscapes.

STAY WITH BEDOUIN WOMEN

You'll be joined by local Bedouin women, who will teach you the ancient art of henna and show you how to apply natural kohl.

YOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival DAY 2 Cooking lesson in Amman and tour of Jerash DAY 3 Wadi Rum DAY 4 Tour of Petra DAY 5 Explore Petra on your own DAY 6 Ma'in Hot Springs DAY 7 Dead Sea DAY 8 Home

YOU WILL GET THE CHANCE TO...

- Stay for seven nights in comfortable accommodation with meals as listed online.
- Tour Amman.
- Try traditional Jordanian cookery.
- Learn about henna in the Wadi Rum desert.
- Go on safari at the Wadi Rum desert camp.
- Stay by the Dead Sea.
- Discover Petra and take part in a shepherd experience.
- Visit the Ma'in Hot Springs.

HOW TO BOOK

PRICE From £1,280pp*
DATES 9th to 16th June 2022
TO BOOK, CALL 0843 775 9090, quoting RED JORDAN
VISIT redonline.co.uk/jordanwomen for the full itinerary. Flights not included, arrange your own or speak to our agent.

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*Price based on two sharing. Single supplement: £220, or Intrepid Travel will randomly allocate rooms for those wishing to share. Subject to availability. Flights not included – arrange your own or speak to our agent.

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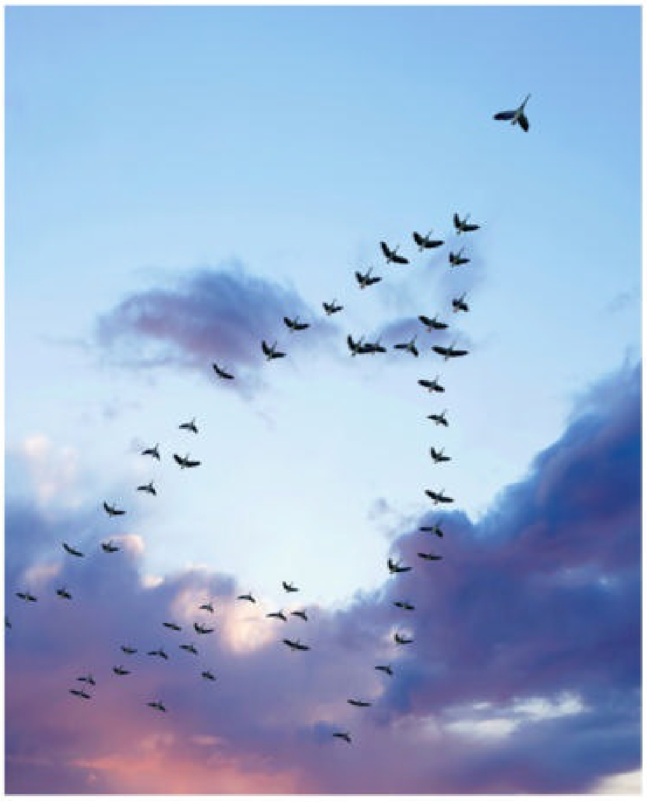
Stars

Yasmin Boland reveals what's in store for you this month...

SAGITTARIUS

23rd November to 21st December

YOU HAVE MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2022. YOUR DOMESTIC LIFE IS POISED FOR BLESSINGS, BUT YOU MAY HAVE TO CLOSE A DOOR BEFORE THE ONES YOU REALLY WANT CAN OPEN.



CAPRICORN

22nd December to 20th January

Throughout 2021, there has been a cosmic clash that has activated your Cash Flow Zone. Perhaps wariness has prevented you from enjoying yourself or you've thrown caution to the wind despite your bank balance. This month, you can decide how you want things to be in 2022.

AQUARIUS

21st January to 19th February

This month may highlight the tension between your desires and those of your family and/or current living situation. There is an immense level of luck and abundance available, if you make the choice that is authentic to you.

PISCES *20th February to 20th March*

An eclipse in your career sector may prompt you to reconsider plans for 2022. But the more you say 'no' now, the more opportunities will open up for you that feel right. A once-a-decade cycle of growth, expansion and abundance awaits. Decide what it is you want and grasp it with both hands.

ARIES *21st March to 20th April*

The current state of the world has dampened your plans for adventure and travel. That said, being open to discovery may have taken you down an unexpected path. Changing values may have also shifted your social circles. This month, be open to anything new, curious or spiritual.

TAURUS *21st April to 21st May*

This month, you might have to reassess recent choices, especially those around professional and/or financial responsibilities. Have you compromised your own happiness for the sake of someone else's? Your personal or professional networks may be part of the solution.

GEMINI *22nd May to 22nd June*

An eclipse in your Relationship Zone may provide a contradiction. While it's a New Moon associated with beginnings, an ending may also be a part of the picture. This is a chance to revise your relationship future by shedding old truths and telling new stories. Career developments may also be part of the story.

CANCER *23rd June to 23rd July*

The chance to re-do daily routines will show up under this month's New Moon Eclipse. If you've been taking on too much and it's impacting your heath, it may be time to practise saying 'no'. Exciting possibilities await, but you can't embrace them if you're stuck in what's old.

LEO *24th July to 23rd August*

The New Moon Eclipse will prompt you to explore fun, creativity and pleasure. If this year has been all work and no play, it's time for a change. Shaking a little salt on your life will remind you what it feels like to have fun. This may help to spice up your romantic life, too!

VIRGO

24th August to 23rd September

This month, the New Moon Eclipse promises an 'out with the old and in with the new' vibe relating to home life, family relationships and living situation. This month may help you manifest a domestic dream and prompt you toward making dramatic improvements that can lead to new happiness.

LIBRA

24th September to 23rd October

December brings another chance to live the good life. This may involve rewriting invisible scripts that say you can't have this or that to be happy. Shedding old beliefs opens the pathways to the joy you crave.

SCORPIO

24th October to 22nd November

The New Moon Eclipse will ignite your core beliefs, which may help you stand firm while moving towards expressing yourself authentically. Do this and happiness and joy is yours for the taking in 2022.

For your extended monthly forecast, visit yasminboland.com

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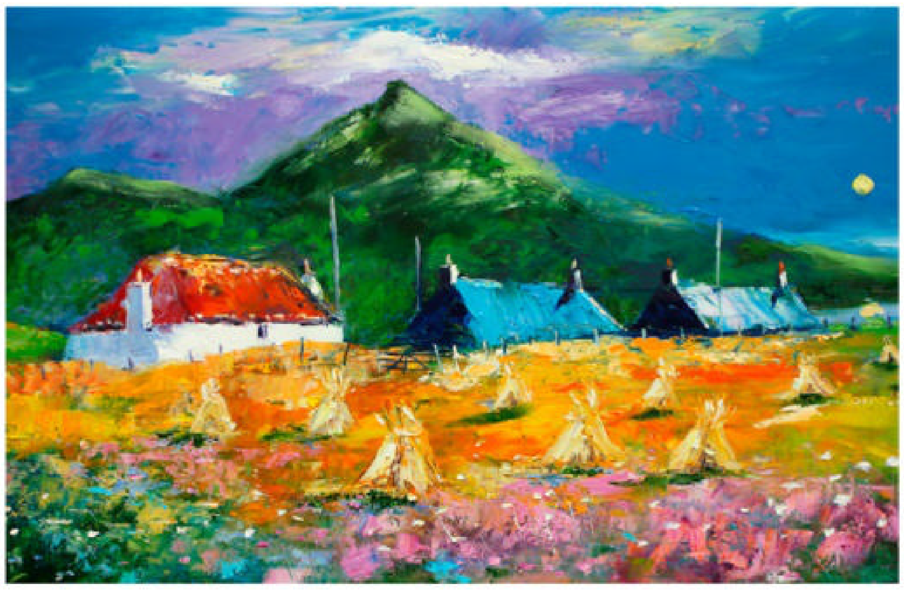

THE TORRANCE GALLERY

JOLOMO
'Lets Go Back to the Hebrides'
Solo Exhibition runs until 16th October.

Jessica Oliver & Nerine Tassie
Two Featured Artists
23rd October – 13th November.

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This month's ESSENTIALS

BAGPAD

Bagpad is the best way to keep your handbags in shape in between uses. No more plastic or paper but instead a long-term, sustainable and elegant solution. Custom designs for Hermès, Chanel, Dior and Louis Vuitton bags and also available for all other luxury brands. Can be made bespoke and personalised with monogramming. Handmade in the UK.

Shop all styles at www.bagpad.com
or call +44(0) 777 507 7600

I.M. PEOPLES

IM PEOPLES is a Norwegian-American premium coat brand, established in 2013. Traditional craftsmanship and innovative designs are the pedestals of our heritage, as incorporated into our flagship – the Original Vinter Coat – made with premium wool blends and authentic Norwegian shearling. Shop a section of ready designed Vinter coats, customise yours with seven easy steps, or book an appointment with Chief Designer and Director, Mareah Peoples to create a personalised order. Our design studio and showroom is based in Oslo.

Visit www.impeoples.com and follow on IG. @impeoplescoatcompany. No forgetting. Stay warm. Keep cool.

THE PERFECT STOCKING FILLER – BEAUTY HYGIENE PLUS ESSENTIALS KIT

The new Beauty Hygiene Plus Essentials Kit is a must-have stocking filler this Christmas!

Keep your makeup brushes, palettes and beauty tools sparkling clean and germ free with the four antibacterial and antiviral Beauty Hygiene Plus products; Quick Dry Brush Cleaning Spray, Quick Dry Makeup Sanitising Mist, Quick Dry Beauty Tools Sanitising Spray and Deep Cleanse Sponge & Brush Wash.
Each product has its own unique individual formulation, for specific use on makeup, makeup brushes, beauty tools, such as tweezers and eyelash curlers, and makeup sponges and powder puffs. The products are quick, easy to use and eliminate 99.9% of bacteria and viruses within two minutes of application.
The bottles are made from 100% ocean bound recycled plastic and come in a handy biodegradable TPU bag with three eco mini bamboo brushes. These products are a must for your everyday beauty routine – let's create new, more healthy daily beauty hygiene habits in 2022!

4 x 50ml, £20.00
Available @Amazon
@Feel Unique
@beautyhygieneplus

BEAUTY HYGIENE ESSENTIALS

This month's ESSENTIALS

LOOK YOUNGER LONGER REGENTIV SPECIALIST SERUM (WITH RETINOL)

REGENTIV
THE SPECIALIST SERUM

This delicate and oh so effective serum for lines, wrinkles, crepey eyes and neck, vertical lip lines, sun damage and much more. Unique formulation of retinol palmitate, aloe vera, vitamin E, SPF, moisturiser – perfect to use twice daily.
35ml £29.95, 50ml £44.95, 105ml £79.95, 200ml £149.

To receive exclusive 15% reader discount apply code RED15 when ordering. www.regentiv.com or call 01923 212555 for advice or to order.
Please see website for full range and special offers.

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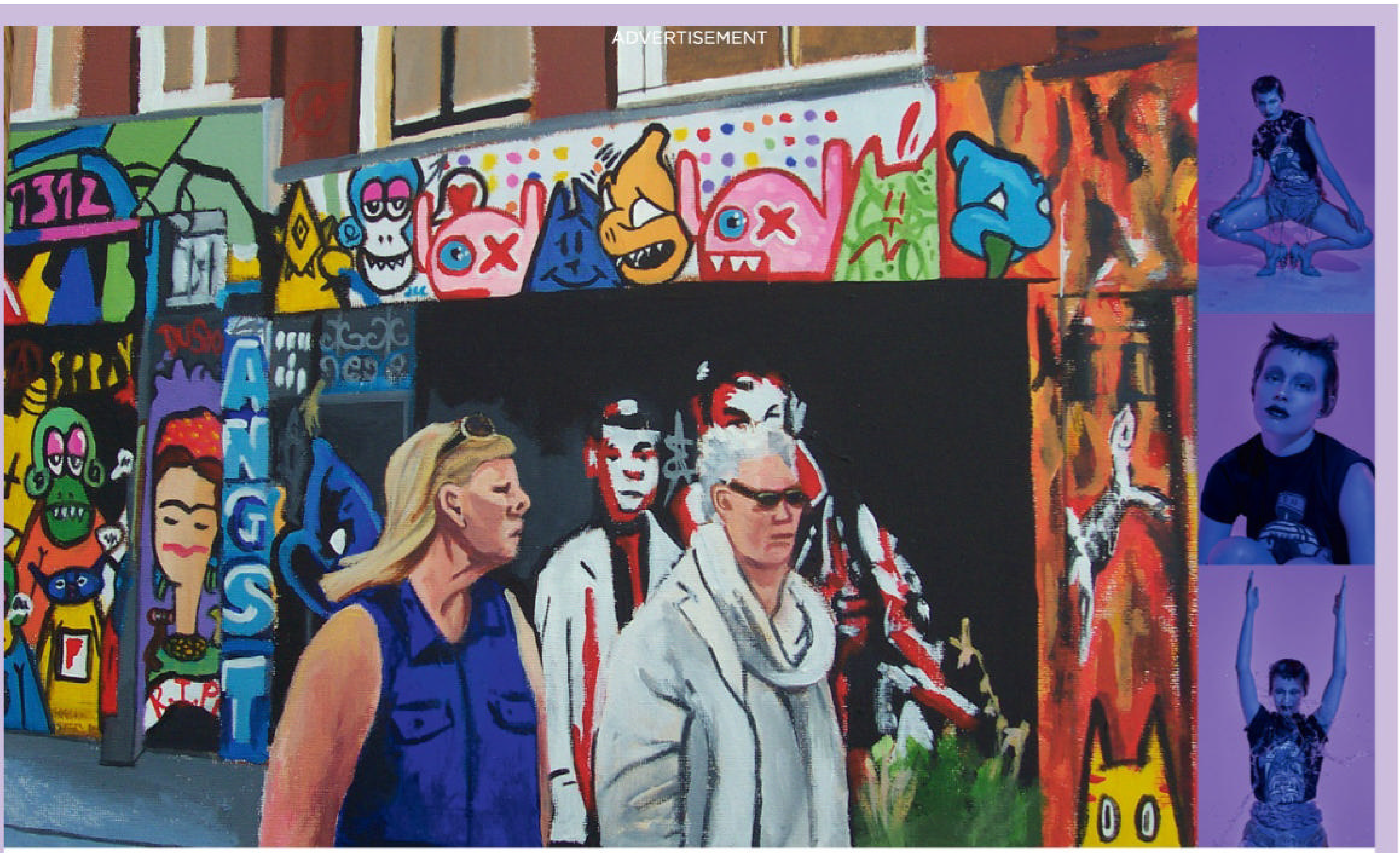

Angela Thouless
Designer & Founder of Tribe All

There is much to divulge from our sit-down chat with the ever so vibrant Angela Thouless; a multitalented, versatile artist, painter and designer whose idiosyncrasies exude on both canvas and clothing. With an astronomical amount of impassioned experience, in 2019, Thouless expanded the urban aesthetics of her art into the all-inclusive T-Shirt apparel brand Tribe All. The brand name speaks for itself, all-inclusive, definitive of Thouless' vision to encompass and embrace a diversified world, irrespective of gender, age, size and background.

Angela Thouless' plunge into fashion and apparel, namely Tribe All, was ignited by a pre-existing fascination for different cultures and their defining qualities. Resultantly, Thouless' works would exhibit that of a global voice; representative and vastly accessible due to her delve into a multitude of cultures. Recalling her painting origins, Thouless mentioned her interests in German art, African art, Tribal art and Primitive art. Upon this recollection, Thouless confirmed how these influences have translated directly into her fashion apparel; this can be seen in Tribe All's Spray Can Collection, which features the tribal symbols and traditional figures of various cultures. Thouless features a diverse modelling cast to don her Tribe All apparel, furthering the all-inclusive, multicultural mentality of the brand. The interplay between Angela Thouless' urban street art and T-Shirt apparel has birthed a distinctive style of artistic practice. Not only can her products be standalone art pieces for viewing, but they are also wearable and practical. This beautiful amalgamation of the symbolic and figurative with the practical and useful has defined Tribe All as an inimitably multifaceted brand; a fashionable statement of inclusivity and individuality.

It is clear that Thouless is purposeful with her art; her art is driven by an innate compassion to have an impact on society's values. She reminisced her beginnings and her awe-inspiring discovery of urban street art in Amsterdam. Following this, in Aberdeen, during the NUArt Festival, Thouless volunteered alongside the artists there and she was astounded by the influence street art could have. During her time there, she'd noticed all the wasted spray paint cans being thrown away at the end of projects. Thouless used these to paint tribal faces, taking this as an opportunity to reuse and recycle... and thus came the idea of Tribe All.

Much has been delayed in the world of art and fashion due to COVID-19, however, this has not inhibited Angela Thouless' consistency and work ethic. Coming up on September 20th, Thouless revealed that she will be taking part in Milan Fashion Week, an exhilarating future development. Tribe All is going to be opening up as "New Talent" with Event Savó. Additionally, Thouless will also be participating in the National Social Media Awards in the United Kingdom.

Angela Thouless' distinctive artistic voice is a constant, no matter the execution. Tribe All is powerfully evocative of Thouless' nondiscriminatory values. The bold aesthetics and progressive attitude of urban street art has provided Thouless with an ideal form of expression, complementing her brand's progressive vision. Angela Thouless considers her art a shared experience; when shared, it holds the most value.

Fashion Editor: Jessica Ciprian
Artist: Angela Thouless
Urban T-Shirt Collection: Tribe All
Accessories: Madam Safa & Jin Lee Shoes: Keeyahri
Photographer: Izzy Schreiber Model: Danni Spooner
Make Up: Andrea Wu Hair Stylist: Hiroki Kojima
Styling & Set: Bessy Huang Assistant: Niki Le

www.tribeall4u.com

TO ADVERTISE HERE PLEASE CALL THE RED TEAM ON 020 3728 6260

My list of EVERYTHING

Actor **JO HARTLEY** *on her favourite things*

MY CAN'T-MISS PODCAST IS… *Absolutely Mental* with Ricky Gervais and Sam Harris. They cleverly combine silliness with serious musings on life.

THE CANDLE I LOVE TO LIGHT IS… The Take Home Spa Candle from The Standard hotel in Miami. I order them online and they remind me of holidays.

MY SIGNATURE LIPSTICK IS… Flame 509 and Unfiltered 511 by Shiseido. They're bold colours and look great when you mix them.

MY FAVOURITE INDEPENDENT SHOP IS… Branch On The Park in east London. Julia has amazing jewellery. I also love nearby Sublime for candles.

MY FOODIE WEAKNESS IS… Tony's chocolate with salted caramel or almonds. I have a major sweet tooth!

WHEN I WANT TO SEND FLOWERS, I CALL… Grace & Thorn on Hackney Road, east London. It's my go-to when I want something extra special.

MY ONE-STOP COFFEE SHOP IS… Balcone or Thingy Cafe in east London. Coffee, reading and meditation is my morning ritual.

ON TOAST, I LOVE TO SPREAD… I like peanut butter, jam, hummus (weird, I know), but you can't beat a thick layer of salted Cornish butter!

MY FAVOURITE PAIR OF SHOES IS… Bright orange sandals from Camper. Comfortable, cool and elegant.

MY SIGNATURE SCENT IS… Le Labo Santal 33. It's the one people know me for and they always ask what it is.

TONY'S CHOCOLONELY
caramel sea salt milk
Kae Tempest
On Connection
SANTAL 33
LE LABO

Chocolate, books and perfume – a few of the things that make Jo happy…

THE SHADE I PAINT MY NAILS IS… At the moment, I'm wearing Sweet Heart by OPI. I go to The Nail Hubb in Victoria Park and I like to mix it up.

THE BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE ARE… Right now, *Meditations* by Jiddu Krishnamurti and *On Connection* by Kae Tempest. They're both so calming.

THE BOXSET I WATCH OVER AND OVER IS… There are so many, but *The Wire* is the one I always go back to.

MY FAVOURITE HOTEL FOR A WEEKEND AWAY IS… Casa Camper in Barcelona. It's super-trendy and a cool experience from start to finish.

THE ALBUM I'LL NEVER TIRE OF IS… *Substance 1987* by New Order. It reminds me of falling in love for the first time as a teenager in Manchester.

THE THING I CAN'T STOP BUYING FOR MY HOME IS… Candles and plants – I'm obsessed with both!

WHEN I WANT TO CRY WITH LAUGHTER, I CALL… My best friend, Keith. We've been friends for more than 20 years. During the lockdowns, we'd just sit on the phone looking at ridiculously expensive properties on Rightmove not even saying a word!

THE SONG THAT GETS ME ON THE DANCEFLOOR IS… Madonna's *Vogue* and *I'm Coming Out* by Diana Ross.

MY FOOLPROOF DINNER PARTY DISH IS… A dhal teamed with some roasted cauliflower and chilli and cumin. If I have meat-eaters, I'll make some lamb chops, too.

THE MANTRA I LIVE BY IS… I have three: acceptance is the key; keep it simple; and all is well. They remind me to stay centred and remember that things happen for a reason and it's how we respond to life that really matters.

Series 2 of In My Skin will be on BBC Three and BBC iPlayer this November

PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID REISS

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Tess Daly

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